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Abstract

Reformed and Charismatic:

The Influence of Pentecostalism in the Reformed Tradition –

Theological Analysis of a Minority Subculture

Gregory Ian Millikan

Historic reconstructions of Pentecostalism and Pentecostal influence in the United States are usually framed around three epochal shifts: fifty years of classical Pentecostalism in the first half of the twentieth century morphed during the Charismatic Renewal of the 1960s-1970s then splintered into various independent Charismatic churches and networks from the 1980s to the present. There are debated versions of this framework and nuanced additions related to global influence and expansion. This study suggests an amendment to the overall framework. Post-Charismatic renewal, rather than a movement in decline and splintering into independent churches, Pentecostalism also went underground in the form of minority theological subgroups. Reformed Charismatics demonstrate a particular version of Charismatic theology and praxis comprised of those who have stayed in their historic churches, yet stand markedly in contrast to their majority church norms.

Ethnographic methods are used to access the beliefs and praxis of these ‘ordinary’ Reformed Charismatics framed as an internally diverse minority navigating the majority theological norms of their Reformed congregation. The project unfolds as a dialogue between academic theology, ordinary theology, autoethnography and interdisciplinary interaction with relevant sociologists and anthropologists. A unique

ecumenical movement unto themselves, Reformed Charismatics are often operating subversively, all the while dynamically integrating two divergent traditions in church history. Theological critique and debates over interpretations of the bible only go so far in addressing the tensions Reformed Charismatics experience. The use of cultural analysis in this study offers insights about the experience, behaviours and spirituality of this internally diverse often overlooked ecclesial subculture all toward deeper understanding of Pentecostal influence more broadly in its myriad of ‘glocal’, contextual forms.

Reformed and Charismatic:
The Influence of Pentecostalism in the Reformed Tradition -- Theological and Cultural
Analysis of a Minority Subculture

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Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

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Introduction

There is a form of Pentecostalism overlooked in current scholarship, hidden in minority subcultures of mainline denominations. Understanding Pentecostal influence more broadly requires attending to the hybrid theology, praxis and experience of these subgroups. Studies on the influence of Pentecostalism often frame the tradition as originating at the dawn of the twentieth century then morphing through wide scale integration among historic churches during the well-documented Charismatic Renewal of the 1960-1970s to the rise of various independent churches and rapid expansion in non-Western contexts. However, rather than a movement in decline post-Charismatic renewal and splintering into independent churches, Pentecostalism also went underground in the form of minority subgroups. Reformed Charismatics are such a subgroup, demonstrating a particular version of Charismatic theology and praxis.

Pentecostal-Charismatic spirituality is in many ways distinct from Reformed theology and praxis. Defining these differences is challenging in the face of so much contextual particularity. Any effort to establish normative definitions of either tradition slips through one's fingers when confronted with another view, another church or another scholar's characterization. Theological debates can only go so far without attending to 'ordinary theology' and the use of ethnography. Theological critique and debates over interpretations of sacred texts may clarify positions, make for interesting analysis and aid in conducting ecumenical dialogue, but they easily dissolve into cultural divisions, differing interpretive grids and irreconcilable personal preferences.

This project seeks a way forward through a dialogical method adapted from pastoral cycles of practical theology. Multiple voices approaching the issue of

Reformed reception of Pentecostal-Charismatic theology and praxis from various disciplines, with various methods and agendas are put in conversation. Ordinary theology, accessed through interviews and participant observation with Reformed Charismatics at Central Presbyterian, is put on level footing with academic theology. Researcher reflexivity and use of autoethnography contribute substantially to the conversation.

Rightly, Pentecostal studies has been dominated recently by focus on rapid expansion in the global south. A unique ecumenical movement unto themselves, Reformed Charismatics in the United States are often a minority subgroup, operating behind closed doors, undercover, all the while dynamically integrating two divergent traditions in church history. By studying this subgroup through borrowing tools from cultural analysis we can gain insights on the current impact of Pentecostalism on Reformed and mainline churches and insights into other relevant theological quandaries related to theological method and the use of ethnography in theology. Attention is given to debates about the use of cultural analysis, the role of ordinary theology and the field of practical theology. The study also engages with live questions among Reformed Charismatics and those leading their communities concerned with how to overcome cultural tension and division.

The opening chapter is a literature review focused on scholarship on the Charismatic movement in the United States from the 1950s to the present. It serves as an overview of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement over the last century. The chapter provides context for where this study fits in the wider field of Pentecostal Studies and the particular contribution it makes.

Chapter two sets the stage for the use of cultural analysis as a theoretical framework and aid in theological analysis. Important theoretical issues are addressed

from simply defining culture to pre-modern, modern and postmodern notions of culture, particularly as it relates to theological reflection. Congregations are framed as distinct social groups with their own particular cultures. Reformed Charismatics are then framed as a minority subgroup within Reformed majority theological norms.

Chapter three turns to methodology by describing in more detail the dialogical approach utilized, adapted from pastoral cycles in practical theology. Debates about the use of ethnography in theological reflection are explored. Then, specifics are given about the use of autoethnography, participant observation and interview approaches in this study.

Chapter four explores Reformed Charismatic belief and praxis in the context of Central Presbyterian. Data is presented describing the cultural dynamics within the congregation, while setting the context for analysis in later chapters. Focus throughout is on Reformed Charismatic experience as a minority subculture.

Chapter five shifts to theological analysis via dialogue with scholars, practitioners and ordinary theologians. The main aim is to distinguish the theological differences between Pentecostal-Charismatic 'culture' and Reformed 'culture'. Along the way the challenges and limitations of theological analysis are highlighted and addressed.

Chapter six continues analysis of Reformed Charismatics at Central Presbyterian in conversation with specific social scientists. The voices of ordinary Reformed Charismatics dominate this chapter, as does data from participant observation in the congregation and autoethnography. The aim is descriptive, giving space for these particular Reformed Charismatic perspectives to be heard in all their diversity. Their spirituality is in focus along with reflections on being a minority

subgroup. General and substantive observations are highlighted throughout with key insights summarized in the concluding chapter.

Chapter 1:
Literature Review and Overview:
Charismatic Movement in the United States of America
1950 – 2016

The aim of the review is to place this project within the diverse field of Pentecostal Studies and highlight the unique contribution it seeks to make. It also surveys Pentecostal-Charismatic historic development over the last century and relevant debates and issues. Focus is on the perspectives and experiences of ‘ordinary’ Reformed Charismatics specifically connected denominationally to the Presbyterian Church (USA). Understanding these Reformed Charismatics involves understanding the wider history of Charismatic Renewal in the United States of which they are an overlooked part.

Scholarship on reception of Charismatic theology and praxis in the Reformed tradition is limited and dominated by theological and biblical reflection or historical reconstruction and analysis of the Charismatic Renewal of the 1960s-1970s. Practical theological reflection has been left to practitioners and the ‘ordinary theologians’ this project interacts with. Scholars utilizing ethnographic methods have mainly focused their research outside American mainline Protestant congregations, studying Pentecostalism in independent churches and ministries, various revivals movements, within the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and predominantly in non-Western regions of the world. This project will add to the growing body of literature exploring Pentecostalism, while also examining an ecclesial subculture that has received little scholarly attention.

The literature review begins with a broad overview of scholarship based on date of publication, discipline, regional focus and other categories to highlight current trends in the field and how this study fits within the whole. Section two surveys various debates about the origins and definition of Pentecostalism to set the context for academic study of the Charismatic movement in America from 1950 onwards. Section three focuses on the Charismatic Renewal itself with particular attention on Presbyterian churches. Surveying the history of the Pentecostal tradition is important for setting the wider context of this study of Reformed Charismatics and is a consistent point of reference in analysing their beliefs and praxis. Attention then turns to defining charismatic spirituality and some initial questions related to culture. Along the way, relevant ‘gaps’ in the scholarship are identified which highlight the need for further research on the perspectives and experiences of ‘ordinary mainline Protestant Charismatics’.

Because focus is on the Reformed tradition in the United States, with special emphasis on the Presbyterian Church (USA), this chapter excludes a large and growing body of literature on Pentecostalism globally, particularly in non-Western contexts. Review of scholarship on reception and renewal in other U.S. mainline Protestant denominations and the Catholic and Orthodox traditions is limited. Also absent are studies in the field of religious experience, closely connected but separate from Pentecostal-Charismatic studies.

1 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SCHOLARSHIP

Research on the Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition is rapidly expanding and diverse. There are two primary reasons for this: 1) an increase in scholars who are themselves Pentecostal or Charismatic and 2) Pentecostalism’s perceived size, rapid growth and unique characteristics for multi-disciplinary study—in short, its overall

impact. Scholars often frame the literature around the time period it was published, its discipline, regional focus and the perspective of the scholar.

1.1 Time period

Scholarship prior to 1950 is very limited, from within Pentecostalism and dominated by practitioners. This includes doctrinal statements, which are characteristically not systematic,¹ pamphlets, missionary letters and limited documentary evidence primarily utilized as data for historical analysis. Kay and Dyer's *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies: A Reader*² provides a sampling of literature from this period and beyond. None is critical scholarship whether written by 'outsiders' or those within Pentecostalism.

During the 1950s – 1970s scholars gave more attention to the movement while Pentecostals engaged further in scholarship. Pentecostal biblical studies shifted from primarily literalistic, devotional reading and doctrinal proof-texting, to more critical engagement.³ Hollenweger's early works were published, bringing historical revision of Pentecostal origins to the fore. The 1960s through 1970s also marked substantial theological, biblical and psychological analysis to address the increased impact of Charismatic phenomena in historic churches.

From the 1970s and onward, the number of trained Pentecostal scholars continued to increase along with greater coordination and collaboration. The Society for Pentecostal Studies began in 1970, with their journal *PNUEMA* inaugurated in

¹ Frank D. Macchia, "The Struggle for Global Witness: Shifting Paradigms in Pentecostal Theology," in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel*, ed. Murray W Dempster, Byron D Klaus, and Douglas Petersen (Carlisle: Regnum Books International, 1999), 8–29.

² *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies: A Reader* (London: London : SCM Press, 2004).

³ Wonsuk Ma, "Biblical Studies in the Pentecostal Tradition: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow," in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel* (Carlisle: Carlisle : Regnum Books International, 1999), 52–69.

1979. Many critical theological, biblical and historical reflections were published with substantial ecumenical engagement. The 1990s and into the present brought an explosion of scholarship: more fields and disciplines, more Pentecostal scholars in different disciplines, focus on global Pentecostalism and scholarship from those indigenous to the contexts studied.

Yet, scholarly interest in Reformed reception of Pentecostal-Charismatic theology has waned. Theological engagement peaked during the 1960s-1970s as Charismatic Renewal inspired Reformed systematic reflection and doctrinal debate. While scholarship has been limited, practitioners have continued to engage with relevant issues, there has been bi-lateral ecumenical dialogue and ordinary Reformed Charismatics continue their practical theological work in the midst of everyday life.

1.2 Insiders and Outsiders

Some categorize scholarly literature based on the perspectives of the scholars themselves: those sympathetic to Pentecostalism, whether ‘insiders’ or ‘outsiders’ and those not whether Christian, atheist or agnostic. Shifts are apparent from when psychologists generally viewed Charismatic phenomena, particularly tongues speaking, as evidence of psychosis or sociologists primarily explained religious experience through deprivation theories, whether social or emotional. Charismatic phenomena are now generally analysed with more nuance, even seen as viable rituals of religious expression and commitment. Classism (stereotyping ‘the uneducated poor’ or ‘hedonistic middle class’), racism (denying African American influences), American-centric theories and rigid epistemologies (with categories such as ‘irrational emotionalism’) are present in the literature. This is more of an issue during the 1950s to 1970s, but still a factor today.

1.3 Other Ways to Categorize Literature

Hocken suggests there are simply two types of literature on Pentecostalism:

(1) contemporary studies of its amazing growth in the developing world, especially in Latin America; and (2) historical studies about Pentecostal origins in the developed world, especially the USA⁴

He also notes a new abundance of literature on classical Pentecostalism, but missing is continued engagement with neo-Pentecostalism “for which there is much less scholarly material available”⁵.

Cartledge organizes the literature through the lens of practical theology. His primary concern is the lack of empirical theology in Pentecostal-Charismatic studies.

While practical theologians are serving the needs of the church by offering resources to church leaders, they rarely seem to engage with rigorous empirical study and therefore fail to explore and map the actual theological praxis of Pentecostals themselves, that is, the theology embedded in their beliefs, values and practices. They offer a largely applications model of practical theology, and in this regard it is very similar to standard evangelical seminary education.⁶

Cartledge cites some examples from his own work and that of M. Stibbe⁷ and S.

Parker,⁸ but overall, “there are only a very few empirical studies by Pentecostal or

Charismatic scholars working from within a practical theology paradigm.”⁹

⁴ R.D.P. Hocken et al., *The Challenges of the Pentecostal, Charismatic and Messianic Jewish Movements: The Tensions of the Spirit*, Ashgate New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies (Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013), 26.

⁵ Hocken et al., 3.

⁶ Mark J. Cartledge, “Practical Theology,” in *Studying Global Pentecostalism : Theories and Methods*, Anthropology of Christianity (Berkeley, Calif.: Berkeley, Calif., 2010), 282.

⁷ Mark WG Stibbe, *Times of Refreshing: A Practical Theology of Revival for Today* (Marshall Pickering, 1995).

⁸ Stephen E. Parker (Stephen Eugene), *Led by the Spirit : Toward a Practical Theology of Pentecostal Discernment and Decision Making*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology. Supplement Series (Sheffield: Sheffield : Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

⁹ Cartledge, “Practical Theology,” 281.

1.4 Fitting This Study Within the Above Categories

Cartledge's narrower category of empirical or practical Pentecostal-Charismatic theology aids in highlighting the aims and methods of this study of Reformed Charismatics, and its unique contribution. Other fields utilize qualitative and quantitative methods in studying Pentecostalism, but are not doing theological reflection. Those doing Pentecostal-Charismatic theology rarely use empirical methods, nor focus on contemporary praxis. And finally, scholars doing practical theology, may use the "applications model," or a "liberation model"¹⁰ Cartledge identifies, rather than an empirical approach that, to use Astley's language, prioritizes ordinary theology¹¹.

This research project is practical theological reflection on ordinary theology, utilizing interdisciplinary ethnographic methods and a dialogical approach to study influences on reception of Charismatic theology and praxis in a particular ecclesial subculture. Focus is on neo-Pentecostalism in the United States. I come to this study as an 'insider' both as an ordained Presbyterian Church (USA) minister and a Reformed Charismatic.

2 CONTEXT OF CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT: PENTECOSTALISM

The main focus of this section is two-fold: 1) setting the context for the Charismatic Movement from 1950 to the present by reviewing its roots in 'classical' Pentecostalism and 2) highlighting different views on the origin and definition of Pentecostalism and implications for debates on the origins and definition of the Charismatic Movement explored further in section three below. The history of the

¹⁰ Cartledge, 276–78.

¹¹ Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology : Looking, Listening and Learning in Theology, Explorations in Pastoral, Practical and Empirical Theology* (Aldershot: Aldershot : Ashgate, 2002).

Pentecostal tradition provides important context for the study of Reformed Charismatics and is consistently referenced throughout this study.

2.1 Debated Origins

2.1.1 Parham or Seymour?

At the turn of the century, in Topeka, Kansas, Charles Parham's bible school students experienced tongues-speaking as part of a 'second baptism' they associated with Jesus and the early church. While leading a similar school in Houston, Texas, Parham formed a relationship of pastoral oversight and partnership with several African American students, most notably William Seymour. Within the year, licensed and funded by Parham, Seymour was sent along with others to Los Angeles. Their relationship became strained during the Azusa Street Revival and they parted ways.

MacRoberts and Hollenweger¹² argue the true roots of Pentecostalism were in the African and African American heritage of Seymour. For Hollenweger, racism led to mainline and mainstream rejection and taming of the Azusa Street Revival.¹³ For C. Robeck, Seymour's vision for inter-racial unity, "ultimately failed because of the inability of whites to allow for a sustained role of black leadership."¹⁴ In D. Daniels assessment,

Race is only one factor along with polity, theology, class, regionalism or sectionalism, and gender, shaping North American Pentecostalism. However, it remains a singularly defining factor for development of Pentecostalism in North America.¹⁵

¹² Iain MacRobert and Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Black Roots and White Racism of Early Pentecostalism in the USA* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1988).

¹³ Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism : Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, Mass.: Peabody, Mass. : Hendrickson, 1997), 20.

¹⁴ *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996), 33.

¹⁵ David Daniels, "'Everybody Bids You Welcome' A Multicultural Approach to North American Pentecostalism," in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism : A Religion Made to Travel* (Carlisle: Carlisle : Regnum Books International, 1999). Daniels also

Despite early efforts toward an inter-racial movement, multi-racial congregations became the exception. White Pentecostals were more likely to attribute the founding of the movement to Parham, African Americans to Seymour.

Harvey Cox links his greatest critiques of Pentecostalism today with the racial tensions of its origins:

Almost all the unsettling experiences I had in the Pentecostal world had been in largely white settings [...] It began to appear more and more certain to me that American Pentecostalism has paid a very high price for its racial divisions [...] What had happened to the spirit of Azusa Street?¹⁶

Similar to Cox, S. Hunt sees problems with Western, white, middle class influence on Pentecostal thought, expression and praxis. He argues the Charismatic Renewal of the 1960s onward had little impact among African American communities and congregations. This was in large part because of the general lack of social engagement associated with the Charismatic Renewal. Also, African American spirituality already included characteristically Charismatic forms of expression.¹⁷

2.1.2 Azusa or Multiple Locations?

There were other revivals prior to and coinciding with Azusa Street with similar religious experiences. The Welsh Revival from 1904-05 had multiple links to leaders in Los Angeles, Britain and beyond.¹⁸ Revival movements were reported in India as far back as 1860. Most noted was a revival at the Mukti Mission in 1905. Poewe goes

addresses Hispanic American Pentecostals alongside the predominant focus on ‘white’ and ‘black’ Pentecostalism.

¹⁶ Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century*, 1st Da Capo Press ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge, Mass.: Da Capo Press, 2001), 296–97.

¹⁷ S. Hunt, *A History of the Charismatic Movement in Britain and the United States of America: The Pentecostal Transformation of Christianity*, A History of the Charismatic Movement in Britain and the United States of America: The Pentecostal Transformation of Christianity, bk. 2 (Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), 678.

¹⁸ For a Wales-centred view of the early 1900s revivals, see Noel Gibbard, *On the Wings of the Dove* (Bryntirion Press, 2002).

further back into history to find “the Asian root of Pentecostalism”¹⁹ tracing the presence of Charismatic theology and praxis among sixteenth century Pietists and Jesuits. The ‘Korean Pentecost’ of 1907-08 followed on one in 1903 among Methodist missionaries in Wonsan.

While Hollenweger traces roots back to African spirituality, he along with H. Cox and C. Robeck still place the origins of Pentecostalism at Azusa Street. Azusa became the central historical moment among diverse influences. A growing number of non-Western scholars alongside A. Anderson are echoing the perspective of E. Wilson: there are multiple beginnings of Pentecostalism and there are many ‘Pentecostalsms’.²⁰

Scholars note several challenges in identifying historical origins. There are limited documentary sources. Those available are dominated by Western Pentecostals²¹ and need to be read critically and in context. Anderson offers the example of Western Pentecostal missionary letters, which he reads as skewed to solicit financial support and therefore de-emphasize the impact of indigenous workers.²² He detects racist, sexist, American- or Euro-centric and colonialist perspectives within the

¹⁹ Karla Poewe, “The Nature, Globality, and History of Charismatic Christianity,” in *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture*, ed. Karla Poewe, Studies in Comparative Religion (University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 7.

²⁰ Everett A. Wilson, “They Crossed the Red Sea, Didn’t They? Critical History and Pentecostal Beginnings,” in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism : A Religion Made to Travel* (Carlisle: Carlisle : Regnum Books International, 1999), 107.

²¹ *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies : A Reader*, xix.

²² Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism : Global Charismatic Christianity*, Second edition. (Cambridge: Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2013), 176.

source material.²³ The agendas and theoretical and methodological strategies used by scholars also need attention.²⁴

2.1.3 American Export or Local and Indigenous?

Debate about origins also involve debate about the growth of Pentecostalism globally. The traditional view attributes the spread of Pentecostalism to the massive mission movement of the early twentieth century from the West to the majority world. A. Anderson instead argues it was through,

the spontaneous contextualization of the Pentecostal message by thousands of [local, indigenous] preachers who traversed these continents with a new message of the power of the Spirit, healing the sick and casting out demons. This may be one of the most important reconstructions necessary in the rewriting of Pentecostal history.²⁵

McClymond dates the most rapid growth of Pentecostalism globally to the 1970s and 1980s, rather the early twentieth century, coinciding with Charismatic Renewal and the growth of independent churches and networks.²⁶

Many scholars are exploring the connections between Pentecostalism and globalization and particularly its adaptability to a myriad of diverse, local contexts.²⁷ This adds important nuance to the historical picture of development. No longer viewed as simply a Western (particularly American) export, there are multiple sources and a multi-directional exchange of influence. This nuanced picture is clarified further by

²³ Anderson, 166–76.

²⁴ Michael Bergunder, “The Cultural Turn,” in *Studying Global Pentecostalism : Theories and Methods*, Anthropology of Christianity (Berkeley, Calif.: Berkeley, Calif., 2010), 51–73.

²⁵ Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism : Global Charismatic Christianity*, 176.

²⁶ Michael J. McClymond, “Charismatic Renewal and Neo-Pentecostalism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2014), 60.

²⁷ *The Globalization of Pentecostalism : A Religion Made to Travel* (Carlisle: Carlisle : Regnum Books International, 1999).

contextual studies of reception and assimilation of Pentecostalism. As McClymond argues,

A culture does not passively receive ideas, rituals, and movements from outside, but engages, confronts, and restructures them [...] The result is a process called “glocalization” whereby the global and local interact to produce a new reality, a “hybrid.” This new social phenomenon does not eradicate the local and global but transforms them.²⁸

This concept should not be limited to ethnic, socio-economic or regional definitions of culture, but include the contextualizing of Pentecostalism in various denominational and congregational cultures, particularly relevant in the Charismatic Renewal explored more below. Reformed Charismatics serve as an example of this “glocalization” process.

2.1.4 Ecumenical or Sect

There are two important areas of scholarship related to ecumenism and Pentecostalism. The first is the mixed history of Pentecostal involvement in the more formal ecumenical movement of the twentieth century.²⁹ Some Pentecostals viewed the ecumenical movement with scepticism; others actively participated in formal and informal efforts to bring about mutual understanding and unity. One example is the five-year long international, bi-lateral dialogue between representatives of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and several ‘classical’ Pentecostal churches and leaders.³⁰ Another example is Moltmann and Kuschel’s volume facilitating Pentecostal dialogue with Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox and perspectives like feminism and liberation theology on everything from “new Congregationalism” to

²⁸ McClymond, “Charismatic Renewal and Neo-Pentecostalism,” 56.

²⁹ See Cecil M Robeck, “Ecumenism,” in *Studying Global Pentecostalism : Theories and Methods*, Anthropology of Christianity (Berkeley, Calif.: Berkeley, Calif., 2010), 286–308. See also, Wolfgang Vondey, “Pentecostalism and Ecumenism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2014), 273–93.

³⁰ “WARC Dialogue,” <http://pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj8/WARC.html>.

Charismatic phenomena and theological concerns.³¹

Second, the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement is studied for its own capacity to bring unity or division.³² The Charismatic Renewal provides ample examples of both.³³ Some scholars frame ‘classical’ Pentecostals as a sect, perceiving themselves as exiles seeking to restore the true eschatological church. Others focus on ways the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement brings disparate groups within Christianity³⁴ and across ethnic, socio-economic and regional barriers together within a shared spirituality and even culture³⁵. Both are evident in Reformed Charismatic experience.

2.2 Debated Definitions

Defining Pentecostalism, like questions of historical origins, has become the subject of increased debate among scholars. This section outlines challenges, approaches and some of the definitions themselves.

For Robeck, “the definition of what it means to be ‘Pentecostal’ has become nearly as elusive as a grain of sand in a desert windstorm”³⁶. The narrow, American-centric criteria of experiential “baptism in the Spirit,” evidenced by glossolalia is no longer adequate to account for the diversity in global Pentecostalism. Using more specific theological definitions can introduce more complexity than clarity in a movement constantly splintering over doctrinal debates. With more non-Western

³¹ *Pentecostal Movements as an Ecumenical Challenge*, Concilium (London: London : SCM, 1996).

³² Cecil M. Robeck, “The Origins of Modern Pentecostalism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2014), 31.

³³ K. McDonnell, *Charismatic Renewal and the Churches* (Seabury Press, 1976), 31.

³⁴ Philip Clifford Owen, “A Study of the Ecumenical Nature of Charismatic Renewal: With Particular Reference to Roman Catholic and Anglican Charismatic Renewal in England,” 2007.

³⁵ K.O. Poewe, *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture*, Studies in Comparative Religion (University of South Carolina Press, 1994), xi-xii.

³⁶ Robeck, “The Origins of Modern Pentecostalism,” 1.

scholars, scholars from various fields, and on-going revision of historical origins it is more common now to speak of Pentecostalsisms. As Anderson argues, all definitions are provisional and need to remain flexible to account for the constant change within Pentecostalism.³⁷

A. Droogers warns of essentialist and normative tendencies in scholarship, particularly an issue in developing definitions.³⁸ While essentialist and normative formulations may help identify core characteristics for comparison and analysis, they obscure diversity and particularity, distorting reliable knowledge. Droogers encourages scholars to become aware of the preferences and perspectives shaped by their background, the research context and the ontological, epistemological and methodological approaches of their particular disciplines.

R. Bueno echoes these concerns, arguing “Pentecostal experiences should be examined and understood as specific historical formations within unequal relations of power”³⁹. Priority is on the particular, the local, in the contextual, historical moment over the homogeneity of a unified global definition of Pentecostalism. “Along with misrepresenting the past, present and even future of these populations, we run a more serious risk of expropriating the voice and agency of ‘locals’.”⁴⁰ R. Bueno encourages qualitative methods that will ensure ‘locals’ within their diverse contexts are seen as a

³⁷ Allan Anderson, “Varieties, Taxonomies, and Definitions,” in *Studying Global Pentecostalism : Theories and Methods*, Anthropology of Christianity (Berkeley, Calif.: Berkeley, Calif., 2010), 15.

³⁸ Andre Droogers, “Essentialist and Normative Approaches,” in *Studying Global Pentecostalism : Theories and Methods*, Anthropology of Christianity (Berkeley, Calif.: Berkeley, Calif., 2010), 47.

³⁹ Ronald N. Bueno, “Listening to the Margins: Re-Historicizing Pentecostal Experiences and Identities,” in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism : A Religion Made to Travel* (Carlisle: Carlisle : Regnum Books International, 1999), 271.

⁴⁰ Margaret M. Poloma, “The ‘Toronto Blessing’ in Postmodern Society: Manifestations, Metaphor and Myth,” in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism : A Religion Made to Travel* (Carlisle: Carlisle : Regnum Books International, 1999), 274.

source of knowledge about Pentecostalism, both participants in and producers of this knowledge as experts able to speak for themselves.

The local should be seen as shaping the global, rather than the reverse. For this to happen, researchers must be self-reflexive and attentive to the power dynamics of their position and those they are studying.⁴¹ This is evident in the minority culture tensions many Reformed Charismatics experience in their congregational settings. Reformed Charismatics cultivate a particular hybrid version of Pentecostalism that can prove elusive as they navigate conflict caused by their praxis.

Anderson offers an overview of four different, but interdependent, approaches used by scholars in defining Pentecostalism:

(1) The first is the typological approach, or classification by similar characteristics. Hollenweger takes this approach in identifying three basic types: classical Pentecostals, the Charismatic renewal movement and Pentecostal independent churches.⁴² Anderson adds a fourth type, delineating between “Older Independent and Spirit Churches,” primarily in India, China and sub-Saharan Africa and “Older Church Charismatics,” such as Catholic, Anglican and Protestant Charismatics. The former may not self-identify as Pentecostal, but they share similar praxis and are distinct from the more recently established neo-Pentecostal or neo-Charismatic Churches.⁴³ Scholars categorize the diversity within Pentecostalism differently, but overall the typological approach is common and highly susceptible to the essentialist and normative challenges described above.

(2) Scholars using a “Social Scientific Approach” define Pentecostalism primarily through psychological, social and cultural characteristics, seeking to identify

⁴¹ Poloma, 284.

⁴² Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism : Origins and Developments Worldwide*, 1.

⁴³ Anderson, “Varieties, Taxonomies, and Definitions,” 17–20.

those common factors that are a definitive influence. These definitions are shaped by the theoretical discourse and presuppositions of the various social scientific disciplines. Characteristics related to ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic distinctions become criterion. Spiritual experience or phenomena are viewed as mental states or illness. They are interpreted as responses to social marginalization or other factors associated with deprivation theories. Pentecostal congregations or movements may be framed as sects, categorized both historically and ideologically and put in relation as competitors within a religious marketplace.

(3) With an “Historical Approach,” definition is through reconstruction of historical origins. This has been demonstrated above, along with its various debates.

(4) The “Theological Approach” defines Pentecostalism based on shared doctrine, polity and praxis. This approach presents challenges of its own in identifying unity in the midst of diversity, accurately interpreting language and contextual nuance and differences between espoused and operative dynamics.

Anderson integrates all four of the above approaches through his “family resemblance analogy”.⁴⁴ “Family resemblances” are features and beliefs that transcend the diversity within Pentecostalism, or per Anderson’s preference, Pentecostalisms, serving as an “ideal”. Then, this ideal is compared to various deviations. For Anderson, the central family DNA is *experience* of the Holy Spirit and *practice* of spiritual gifts. From this central DNA various sub-groups can be categorized based on theological, historical and cultural factors, creating a more fully defined family tree.

P. Hocken integrates these two categories of *experience* and *practice*, preferring the latter term. Practice includes experience while guarding against any perception of passivity or lack of rootedness in a tradition, with particular embedded meanings,

⁴⁴ Anderson, 15.

boundaries and interpretations.⁴⁵ Hocken identifies five defining Pentecostal practices, distinguishing them from Evangelical, Liberal Protestantism and Roman Catholic praxis: (1) direct relationship with God and expectation of divine revelation and activity, (2) de-centralized participation in worship forms, (3) a different orientation toward the role of experience in relation to scripture and tradition, (4) an integration of physical and spiritual that is less rationalistic than the other traditions, and (5) a more anecdotal and narrative approach to the exposition of scripture, preaching and ministry.⁴⁶

Hollenweger notes similar characteristics, but stops short of defining Pentecostalism. He altered his earlier definition, centred on groups that profess a second baptism of the Spirit following conversion, often accompanied by speaking in tongues.⁴⁷ At the publishing of *Pentecostalism* in 1997, he argued more needed to be known about Pentecostalism globally, “its convictions, history, liturgies and social practices” before further definition could be given.⁴⁸ Hollenweger’s most significant contribution, as highlighted above, is in identifying the “black root” of Pentecostalism. He does offer key features of this “root,” which he credits with the rapid global growth of Pentecostalism:

- orality of liturgy;
- narrativity of theology and witness;
- maximum participation at the levels of reflection, prayer and decision-making and therefore a form of community that is reconciliatory;
- inclusion of dreams and visions in personal and public forms of worship which function as a kind of icon for the individual and the community;

⁴⁵ Peter D. Hocken, “A Charismatic View on the Distinctiveness of Pentecostalism,” in *Pentecostalism in Context: Essays in Honor of William W. Menzies*, ed. Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies, Journal of Pentecostal Theology. Supplement Series (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 98.

⁴⁶ Hocken, 98.

⁴⁷ Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism : Origins and Developments Worldwide*, 327.

⁴⁸ Hollenweger, 327.

- an understanding of correspondence between body and mind, the most striking applications being the ministry of healing by prayer and liturgical dance.⁴⁹

Hollenweger identifies four additional influences in “genuine Pentecostalism”:

Catholic spirituality,⁵⁰ social and political engagement from the Holiness Movement, various critical and reforming elements, and ecumenicity--creating unity in all its diversity.⁵¹ Additionally, he highlights a way of doing theology that is “experience-related, open to oral forms,” ecumenical and expressed primarily through pneumatology.⁵²

H. Cox, through his own qualitative research, aims to “decipher Pentecostalism’s inner meaning and discern the source of its enormous appeal”⁵³. He identifies two key features: experience and Spirit. Counter to Hocken, Cox critiques Pentecostals for being vague in their definition of experience: “virtually anyone can claim anything in the name of experience”⁵⁴. Whereas other scholars may see this lack of clarity as a key feature in Pentecostalism’s capacity to adapt to many, diverse local contexts, for Cox it is a liability for the longevity and health of the movement. Pentecostalism could devolve into a self-absorbed cult of experience. Cox also calls for clarity as to what is meant by “Spirit”. He is concerned about a shift from ‘classical’ Pentecostal focus on Christ’s immanent return to a focus more on his loving presence, which for Cox comes at the expense of losing the social prophetic edge of Azusa Street that emphasized renewal at all levels of society and culture.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Hollenweger, 18–19.

⁵⁰ Hollenweger, 143.

⁵¹ Hollenweger, 397.

⁵² Hollenweger, 329.

⁵³ Cox, *Fire from Heaven : The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century*, xvii.

⁵⁴ Cox, 314.

⁵⁵ Cox, 318–19.

Many more scholars may be cited in the debate about definitions. As with origins, it is generally agreed there is a need to talk about Pentecostals. Too rigid, essentialist or normative definitions break down in the face of the myriad of differing and at times contradictory contextual theologies at the level of culture, congregations and even individual or personal expression.⁵⁶ Its size, rapid growth and adaptability are all attributes that have inspired scholars to define and label Pentecostalism in the first place. Basically all definitions emphasize religious experience, specifically experience and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. While not necessarily unique to Pentecostalism, no other Christian tradition makes experience and praxis of the Spirit as central to defining Christianity itself.

All of the above approaches to defining Pentecostalism appear in this study. However the dominant focus throughout is framing the distinctions between the Reformed tradition and Pentecostalism based on culture. As Reformed Charismatics consistently demonstrate, they have developed a countercultural theology and praxis that clashes in diverse ways with the norms in their congregations. What is abnormal or contentious in a Reformed congregation is often accepted in Pentecostal-Charismatic churches. However, not all Reformed Charismatics embrace wholesale the beliefs and praxis routine in independent Charismatic or Pentecostal churches. Their internally diverse spirituality is in the wide middle ground.

3 CHARISMATIC RENEWAL

Scholars agree something significantly shifted within the Pentecostal

⁵⁶ Stanley Johannesen, "Third-Generation Pentecostal Language: Continuity and Change in Collective Perceptions," in *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture*, ed. K.O. Poewe, Studies in Comparative Religion (University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 176.

movement in the United States primarily during the 1960s through the late 1970s.

There was a wide scale, some argue sudden and simultaneous,⁵⁷ embrace of Pentecostal theology and praxis by those within mainline denominations. This added more diversity to the theology and overall impact of Pentecostalism and created an entirely new form: Charismatic Renewal. Different than ‘classical’ Pentecostalism in key ways, it became identified as a movement in its own right, a parallel, but closely connected “second wave”⁵⁸.

On the whole, scholars have given less attention to the Charismatic Renewal than the wider Pentecostal movement. Appropriately, the ever increasing body of literature is focused on Pentecostalism globally, particularly expansion in the global south. Scholarship on the Charismatic Renewal in the United States is dominated by Catholic theological reflection. This may be in part because Renewal in the Catholic Church initially began at universities and diocesan offices rather than in parishes, primarily taking the form of prayer groups. In Protestant churches, Renewal came through pastors and individual congregants, and eventually became an issue denominational leadership had to address. Below is an effort to review key scholarship focused on the Charismatic Renewal in the United States, with special emphasis on the Presbyterian Church (USA).

3.1 Origins of Charismatic Renewal

There is significant agreement among scholars reconstructing the history of the Charismatic Renewal in the United States, particularly compared to debates around Pentecostal origins. Documentary sources are more prevalent and diverse. There is

⁵⁷ Hunt, *A History of the Charismatic Movement in Britain and the United States of America: The Pentecostal Transformation of Christianity*, 160.

⁵⁸ David Barrett, “The Worldwide Holy Spirit Renewal,” in *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901-2001*, by V. Synan (Thomas Nelson, 2012), 381.

more theological reflection, practitioner engagement and media coverage and more living first-hand witnesses. However, tracing the various stages of development in each denomination is difficult. The overarching historical narrative is one of mainline denominations that initially rejected Pentecostalism in the first half of the twentieth century gradually embracing it up through the 1950s and a watershed period of simultaneous cross-denominational reception starting in the 1960s. Most scholars see the movement peaking with specific events in the late 1970s and then either declining or morphing in significant ways.

It is common for scholars to place this overarching narrative within the backdrop of three distinct periods in North American Pentecostalism. For example, C. Peter Wagner identifies three waves of Pentecostal revival.⁵⁹ The first is the ‘classical’ Pentecostal era from the first decade of the twentieth century until the second wave of ‘Charismatic Renewal’ in the 1960s which was followed by a the third wave in the 1980s marked by a proliferation of independent churches and ministries. This history is debatable, as historical links and distinguishing moments tend to blend together creating a more complex picture.

Newbigin and van Dusen describe what they see as a “third stream” or “third force” within all of church history. The first ‘stream’ is the Roman Catholic tradition’s emphasis on continuity with orthodox, sacramental tradition. The Protestant tradition, as the second ‘stream’, brought emphasis on interpretation and proclamation of the Bible. The ‘third force’ of Pentecostalism emphasizes the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit. For Newbigin, all three are essential for Christian faith.⁶⁰ And as Farrell

⁵⁹ C. Peter. Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit : Encountering the Power of Signs and Wonders Today* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Servant Publications, Vine Books, 1988).

⁶⁰ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God : Lectures on the Nature of the Church*, Kerr Lectures (London: London : SCM Press, 1953).

observed in the early 1960s, the ‘third force’ was being dispersed among the first and second.⁶¹

The most glaring deficiency in various historical accounts is the neglect of the presence and impact of “ordinary theologians”—people within mainline denominations with no formal theological training. Their involvement is often reduced to statistics, categorizing them as ‘attenders’, ‘subscribers’ or ‘tongues-speakers’, and effectively ignoring their stories as a rich resource for understanding Charismatic Renewal. Historical reconstructions are primarily based on key leaders and key moments all undergirded by numerical statistics. This is exemplified in Synan’s historical accounts. He is not always clear on how the numerical data is derived, but it is the criterion for what events are recounted and assertions about their significance. Statistical analysis is particularly challenging because of the denominational diversity within the Charismatic Renewal, Charismatics’ tendency to not count themselves and because the Renewal was happening within existing churches, not as separate, more easily quantifiable groups.

On top of these challenges, Charismatic Renewal brought to the fore a particular demographic which may have been present in historic churches for decades: the ‘closet Charismatic’. Even at the height of the Renewal, it was risky, particularly socially, to be ‘openly’ Charismatic. Those willing to take the risk may have been stronger in their convictions, willing to be activists and reformers and therefore not necessarily representing the majority in their views and experiences. Other Charismatics were content to keep their expression of faith private rather than part of corporate worship and praxis. Others could simply attend one of the many and diverse Pentecostal churches in their community at the time. And there were the myriad of

⁶¹ Hunt, *A History of the Charismatic Movement in Britain and the United States of America: The Pentecostal Transformation of Christianity*, 3.

options in between, including those dealing with their own uncertainty, those who found community within their congregation with other ‘closet Charismatics’ and those not privy to all the theological debates and controversies surrounding their so called Charismatic expressions of faith. Accessing all this ambiguity within and outside the numbers presented by historians requires more substantial engagement with individual ‘ordinary Charismatics’. This requires wider use of ethnographic methods alongside the surveys, attendance statistics and anecdotal evidence utilized in historical accounts.

As mentioned above, prior to the 1960s the story is one of wholesale rejection of Pentecostalism by mainline churches in the United States.⁶² Harvey Cox offers a personal narrative of some of the dynamics at play that put distance between historic churches and the Pentecostal movement.⁶³ Synan lists the factors Cox narrates.⁶⁴ The differences were not just theological. Pentecostal corporate worship services were noisy, disorderly and confusing for outsiders. The spiritual practices and phenomena common among Pentecostals were not understood and perceived as emotionalism, enthusiasm or even mental instability. Societal divisions and prejudices along socio-economic and racial lines were a factor. Pentecostals were often poor, underprivileged and uneducated compared to many in mainline churches. Mutual ignorance was compounded by an early lack of dialogue. For McClymond these combined factors led to only a few instances of Charismatic phenomena outside of Pentecostal denominations prior to the Renewal.⁶⁵

⁶² America is unique in this regard. More common globally is an earlier, more integrated and widespread embrace of Charismatic expression within historic churches.

⁶³ Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century*, 3–18.

⁶⁴ V. Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901-2001* (Thomas Nelson, 2012), 149.

⁶⁵ McClymond, “Charismatic Renewal and Neo-Pentecostalism.”

In historical reconstructions based on key leaders, key moments and the numbers, no leader is more associated with the start of Renewal than Episcopal priest Dennis Bennett. Depending on the historian, the Renewal inaugurated, centred or at least became mainstream when Bennett announced to his Van Nuys, California congregation in 1960 that he spoke in tongues. Within a matter of months he resigned his position. Although not the first church leader to openly embrace Charismatic experience and face the varied consequences, his experience caught the eye of the national media. A well-respected Episcopalian priest was affirming the validity of oft-maligned Pentecostal experience.

For Synan, Bennett's real significance came later with his success pastoring a congregation in Seattle. A sympathetic bishop invited Bennett to lead St Luke's Episcopal Church, a congregation in decline. Bennett led the community openly and corporately in Charismatic Renewal. The church grew rapidly, becoming the largest Episcopal congregation in the Northwestern United States. During a time when many mainline congregations were dwindling across the nation, when tensions over Charismatic phenomena led to leaders being fired or churches splitting, Bennett and St. Luke's became evidence cross-denominationally of the advantages of Charismatic Renewal. According to Synan, "soon afterward an avalanche of pastors and laymen followed Bennett into the movement".⁶⁶ Several Reformed Charismatics interviewed at Central Presbyterian mentioned Bennett's influence.

Again, other than Bennett's own account⁶⁷ of the his time leading St. Luke's, we do not have any congregational studies or qualitative research to shed light on why this particular congregation appeared to thrive while others in the Seattle area did not, and

⁶⁶ Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901-2001*, 151.

⁶⁷ Dennis J. Bennett, *Nine O'clock in the Morning* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1980).

why other efforts by Charismatic pastors and leaders fared differently. It isn't until the 1980s with John Wimber and Vineyard Churches and particularly in the 1990s with studies on Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship that we see more scholars from the social sciences, as well as theologians utilizing social scientific methods, studying the Charismatic movement in North America. There are always exceptions, especially if psychological study of religious experience is taken into account. However, efforts to study contextual particularities, including the influence of culture, are the exception, not the norm.

By the early 1960's, with Dennis Bennett and others like him, the "trickle" of Renewal "became a flood"⁶⁸. What led to scholarly consensus of a near total rejection to a near simultaneous, sudden embrace? As Anderson observes, there were "significant influences prior to 1960 that helped change the attitude of many in the older churches about the Pentecostal experience"⁶⁹. These influences can be put in two, broad overarching categories. First are influences from within Pentecostalism. The second are wider cultural and religious factors playing out in America at the time.

3.2 Influence of American Society and Religion

The 1950s to 1970s were a period of significant upheaval throughout American society. Traditional values and norms were questioned and replaced as various countercultural revolutions gained a significant hearing. Technology rapidly changed the proliferation of information, the movement of people and the production and consumption of goods. The world was becoming more interconnected and interdependent globally, more urban than rural, and increasingly pluralistic. Mainline,

⁶⁸ McClymond, "Charismatic Renewal and Neo-Pentecostalism," 35.

⁶⁹ Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism : Global Charismatic Christianity*, 145.

particularly liberal Protestant churches were in decline,⁷⁰ as well as a commonly shared civil religion.⁷¹ All these factors led sociologists to predict ever-increasing secularization in American society. But instead, as Cox argues, spirituality was on the rise.⁷²

For Hunt and others, this was another turn of a recurring cycle in American history: revival and increased religious commitment followed by stagnation and decline, then renewed calls for revival. Hunt outlines five periods of this pattern going back to the Puritan awakening of the seventeenth century.⁷³ Each new period of revival brought in new forms of spirituality outside traditional norms. Alongside the more conservative responses of evangelical churches and the experientialism of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement, alternative spirituality outside orthodox Christianity and formal religion gained broader acceptance. Counter to Berger's theory that increased religious pluralism undermines the plausibility of belief and leads to less participation, Hunt cites Finke and Stark who argue increased pluralism creates more competition in the religious marketplace and therefore more active participation.⁷⁴ Of particular interest for scholars is the influence of fundamentalism. This includes debates about Pentecostal and Evangelical interaction⁷⁵ and the fundamentalist strains within each.⁷⁶ Cox, never one to shy away from sweeping generalizations, argues this

⁷⁰ Hunt, *A History of the Charismatic Movement in Britain and the United States of America: The Pentecostal Transformation of Christianity*, 94.

⁷¹ Hunt, 86.

⁷² Pentecostalism's significant influence was one of the decisive factors in Cox departing from his own earlier secularisation theories.

⁷³ Hunt, *A History of the Charismatic Movement in Britain and the United States of America: The Pentecostal Transformation of Christianity*, 92.

⁷⁴ Hunt, 90.

⁷⁵ See Hocken, "A Charismatic View on the Distinctiveness of Pentecostalism."

⁷⁶ See Russell P. Spittler, "Are Pentecostals and Charismatics Fundamentalists? A Review of American Uses of These Categories," in *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture*, ed. K.O. Poewe, Studies in Comparative Religion (University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 103–18.

is the current, high stakes question for Pentecostalism and religion across the board: will Pentecostals stay with their experiential roots or deteriorate into increasing fundamentalism?⁷⁷

Wunthrow offers a different framework to understand the profound changes in religion and spirituality in American society over the last sixty years. Rather than solely looking to traditional institutions for religious faith, individuals were open to multiple and diverse sources, creating a “patchwork” spirituality according to their personal preferences.⁷⁸ But, this shift from a “dwelling oriented spirituality” of the first half of the twentieth century to a “seeking oriented spirituality” left some needing depth and coherence lacking in a spirituality of their own making. For Wunthrow this led to another shift toward a more practice oriented “cluster of intentional activities concerned with relating to the sacred” primarily in ordinary, daily life.⁷⁹ Wunthrow offers many examples of these practices along with the various societal forces behind the shifts. To his main point, spirituality has changed alongside the vast changes in American society of the latter half of the twentieth century, becoming more open, or at least more tolerant of diverse forms, and more personal and experiential in concrete, practical ways.

As a final example, Andrew Walker argues quite plainly that the Charismatic Renewal of the 1960s-1970s followed lock step with the cultural shifts in America during this period. He traces how despite appearing to the contrary the Pentecostal movement was not pre-modern nor anti-modern. Instead, at times unintentionally, it

⁷⁷ Cox, *Fire from Heaven : The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century*, 308.

⁷⁸ Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven : Spirituality in America since the 1950s* (Berkeley: Berkeley : University of California Press, 1998), 4.

⁷⁹ Wuthnow, 170.

fully embraced modernity throughout the Charismatic Renewal and into neo-Pentecostalism:

It is surely no coincidence that when Pentecostalism was transformed from its working class style to its middle class one we had moved from early to late modernity: an era that with the advent of consumerism in the 1950s saw the demise of ascetic individualism and the rise of hedonistic individualism [...] To be a Charismatic, then, was phenomenologically identical to being a Pentecostal but culturally redefined by class, taste and the late modern preoccupation with therapy and self-fulfilment.⁸⁰

Walker's analysis tends toward reductionism. It may serve to offer a map of high-level trends, but does not give the detail a more interdisciplinary study might. His argument particularly breaks down when faced with the rapid change and significant diversity of current forms of neo-Pentecostalism. His critiques, particularly of the 'Toronto Blessing', become one-sided diatribes that tell us more about Walker and other detractors than the 'Toronto Blessing' itself. But, he does offer a clearly laid out perspective of the influence of wider American culture on the Charismatic Renewal. To Anderson's thesis, and possibly stating the obvious, Pentecostalism became more "socially acceptable," and therefore embraced by mainline congregations, by more fully accepting the cultural norms and trends of society.

3.3 Influences within Pentecostalism

Hunt argues the wider ecumenical movement of the twentieth century facilitated wider acceptance of Pentecostalism. Although Pentecostals and ecumenists often found themselves at odds with one another, the ecumenical movement's conviction that there are many expressions of the same Spirit created an environment for diverse

⁸⁰ Andrew Walker, "Thoroughly Modern: Sociological Reflections on the Charismatic Movement from the End of the Twentieth Century," in *Charismatic Christianity: Sociological Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Basingstoke : Macmillan, 1997), 29–30.

spiritual expression.⁸¹ David du Plessis, in particular, is often cited for his impact as a Pentecostal effectively working within the ecumenical movement.⁸²

Particularly important for Charismatic Renewal was interaction between Pentecostals and Evangelicals. Hocken describes it as the ‘evangelicalization of Pentecostalism,’ which resulted in debated consequences. While allowing greater understanding and acceptance of Pentecostalism in mainline churches, for Hocken it came at too great a price in the form of changes to Pentecostal theological emphases.⁸³

For many scholars the healing movement played a crucial role in exposing the wider Christian community to Pentecostalism. Independent healing evangelists travelled throughout the United States and Canada, ministering within churches and outside gatherings, tent meetings and crusades. As more non-Pentecostals experienced healing, it led to a “veritable explosion of interest”⁸⁴ in the healing movement, launching a Healing Revival from 1947-1958⁸⁵. Key figures like Willam Branham, Oral Roberts, T.L. Osborne and Kathryn Kuhlman, as well as networks like the Voice of Healing with more than 100 healing evangelists were facilitating experiences that led many to become “ardent Pentecostals”⁸⁶.

The influence of technology, particularly print, television and audio and video resources during this era cannot be overemphasized. Charismatic events were covered

⁸¹ Hunt, *A History of the Charismatic Movement in Britain and the United States of America: The Pentecostal Transformation of Christianity*, 157.

⁸² Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism : Global Charismatic Christianity*, 146. For du Plessis’ impact on Renewal in the Presbyterian Church see Robert R. Curlee and Mary Ruth Isaac-Curlee, “Bridging the Gap: John A. Mackay, Presbyterians, and the Charismatic Movement,” *American Presbyterians* 72, no. 3 (1994): 144.

⁸³ Hocken, “A Charismatic View on the Distinctiveness of Pentecostalism.”

⁸⁴ Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901-2001*, 150.

⁸⁵ McClymond, “Charismatic Renewal and Neo-Pentecostalism,” 35.

⁸⁶ Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901-2001*, 150.

by the mainstream news media, and those within the healing, Pentecostal and Charismatic movement increasingly produced their own content. Two of the most influential books were David Wilkerson's *The Cross and the Switchblade*⁸⁷ and journalist John Sherrill's *They Speak with other Tongues*⁸⁸. Sherrill's book argued the American middle class "with its stately churches and comfortable lifestyles could embrace the Pentecostal experience—it was not reserved for people on the 'other side of the tracks'."⁸⁹ Wilkerson, an Assemblies of God pastor, collaborated with Sherrill to tell testimonies of the significance of spiritual power in rehabilitating drug addicts at Teen Challenge in Brooklyn, New York in 1958. Publications like *The Reader's Digest* picked up these stories and circulated them globally. The book became a film, casting pop star Pat Boone, himself a Charismatic, in the leading role. Several Reformed Charismatics interviewed in this study mentioned the impact of these books on their spiritual formation.

Returning again to Anderson's argument, all this media exposure and celebrity star power made Charismatic spirituality all the more socially acceptable.⁹⁰ In a similar vein, Synan observes the impact of the increasing affluence of Pentecostals post-World War II, enabling them to build larger, more modern churches. Scholars also cite the impact of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship and its sister organization Woman's Aglow. Open proponents of capitalist principles and unapologetic about financial prosperity, FGBMFI focused on encouraging Pentecostal experience and praxis among 'lay' people in everyday life. They told members to

⁸⁷ David Wilkerson, *The Cross and the Switchblade*, ([New York: B. Geis Associates; distributed by Random House, 1963).

⁸⁸ John L. Sherrill, *They Speak with Other Tongues*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964).

⁸⁹ Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism : Global Charismatic Christianity*, 149.

⁹⁰ Anderson, 149.

remain involved in their current churches while also giving healing evangelists a wider platform by inviting them to speak at FGBMFI events.⁹¹

Several other independent movements on the fringe of Pentecostalism are credited with impacting the Charismatic Renewal. Anderson notes the Jesus People movement, with its hybrid of Charismatic spirituality and the alternative ‘hippie’ culture of the 1960s, particularly for its impact on Christian worship music and young people.⁹² For McClymond, the Latter Rain Movement, given little attention by scholars,

foreshadowed themes that emerged from the 1970s to the early 2000s, for example, personal prophecy, the ‘five-fold ministry’ (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers), prolonged fasting, Christian unity, and contemporary worship.⁹³

Kay and Dyer credit the Latter Rain Movement for renewing Pentecostalism during a time of routinization and institutionalization and for the Movement’s impact on the increasing number of Healing Evangelists.⁹⁴

‘Ordinary’ Pentecostals were equipped and motivated to share their theology and praxis with their neighbours, co-workers and family members, some of whom were part of historic churches. For example, Hunt notes the growing influence of neo-Pentecostal prayer groups “discernible through the charismatic prayer groups and less detectable channels of the Renewal at the congregational level”.⁹⁵ Such groups had a pervasive impact on the Reformed Charismatic subculture at Central Presbyterian, the research site for this study. While, according to Synan, hundreds of thousands of people left their more ritualistic and formal churches to join the exciting worship of the

⁹¹ Anderson, 145–46.

⁹² See R.A. Bustraan, *The Jesus People Movement: A Story of Spiritual Revolution among the Hippies* (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2014).

⁹³ McClymond, “Charismatic Renewal and Neo-Pentecostalism,” 35.

⁹⁴ *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies : A Reader*, xxii.

⁹⁵ Hunt, *A History of the Charismatic Movement in Britain and the United States of America: The Pentecostal Transformation of Christianity*, 196.

Pentecostals,⁹⁶ an increasing number were staying in their denominations. The overall impact of these ‘ordinary theologians’ is difficult for scholars to detect and to describe with any detail. Hence, accessing their stories and experiences, a main aim in this study, may offer new insights into Pentecostal influence.

3.4 The Response of Protestant Churches

McDonnell has done the most significant work on mainline Protestant response to Charismatic Renewal, cataloguing official church statements in his three volume *Presence, Power, Praise: Documents on the Charismatic Renewal*⁹⁷ and offering analysis in *Charismatic Renewal and the Churches*⁹⁸. Reactions within each congregation and denomination were mixed. For McDonnell it was more than simply theological or doctrinal disagreement, cultural and ritualistic norms were being questioned. Embracing Charismatic expression meant change in areas ranging from locus of authority to worship style.⁹⁹ What changed and to what degree became points of significant contention as factions formed between those experiencing charismatic phenomena and those who were not. This was intensified, according to McDonnell, because:

many of the early neo-Pentecostals were excessively aggressive and that many brought with them the cultural baggage and the exegetical tradition of classical Pentecostalism¹⁰⁰

Mainline church reactions could be equally aggressive, equivalent to throwing the baby (Charismatic theology and praxis) out with the bathwater (Pentecostalism).

⁹⁶ Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901-2001*, 150.

⁹⁷ K. McDonnell, *Presence, Power, Praise : Documents on the Charismatic Renewal* (Liturgical Press, 1980).

⁹⁸ McDonnell, *Charismatic Renewal and the Churches*.

⁹⁹ Hunt, *A History of the Charismatic Movement in Britain and the United States of America: The Pentecostal Transformation of Christianity*, 164.

¹⁰⁰ McDonnell, *Charismatic Renewal and the Churches*, 44.

McDonnell's analysis points to the prevalence and various deficiencies of the psychological assessments used in denominational studies—particularly related to design, scope and researcher bias.¹⁰¹ As Hunt observes,

Prior to the 1960s the prevailing understanding of tongues by non-Pentecostal denominations, along with the interpretation of psychologists and sociologists, was that it constituted a sign of pathological or personality disorders.¹⁰²

As mentioned above, psychological and sociological perspectives gradually changed in the 1970s as tongues-speaking and other phenomena were framed as rituals and part of participation and commitment to faith and church life. Denominational studies also tended to prefer theological reflection over scientific methods in determining the validity and meaning of religious experience.

Overall denominational responses ranged from cautious and critical acceptance to outright rejection and direct discipline. For example, some studies in the Lutheran Church concluded tongues-speaking was not gibberish but had tonal structures similar to language. But, there was concern about the dangers of “enthusiasm” particularly linked to revivalist expectation and Charismatic expressions of worship. Emotionalism and a suspension of rational faculties could make one susceptible to spiritual manipulation. So, tongues-speaking, in particular, was discouraged in corporate settings. It was restricted to private life and personal devotion. The Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church took a stronger stance, concluding such phenomena were non-biblical and the theology and praxis non-Lutheran. On top of sanction of current leadership, potential applicants for ordination were directly asked if they were neo-Pentecostal. If so, they were allowed to pursue seminary studies only if it did not lead

¹⁰¹ McDonnell, 150.

¹⁰² Hunt, *A History of the Charismatic Movement in Britain and the United States of America: The Pentecostal Transformation of Christianity*, 216.

to certification for ministry in the denomination. Pastors were threatened with discipline and in certain cases entire churches were disavowed.¹⁰³

McDonnell categorized the controversies based on denomination. Those closest historically and theologically to Pentecostalism, such as the Christian Missionary Alliance and Church of the Nazarene, were the most opposed and least influenced. Liturgical churches, like Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopal and Roman Catholic, furthest historically and theologically from Pentecostalism, proved the most receptive.¹⁰⁴ Du Plessis suggests a similar pattern with fundamentalist churches most resistant, evangelical churches less so and liberal mainline churches the most open and supportive.¹⁰⁵ Hunt differs here, isolating Presbyterian and Reformed churches in the USA as the staunchest critics of Charismatic Renewal.

On the whole, Hunt argues, the significance of the controversies was disproportionate to the actual number of people involved and directly impacted.¹⁰⁶ As the Renewal continued into the 1970s tension still existed, but had cooled somewhat. Many of the lines of debate were drawn and rehashed and the dust had settled. Fifteen to twenty years had allowed more time to 'wait and see' about the overall effects of the Renewal coupled with a recognition that in some sense it was a new normal.

There was also time for more nuanced theological and cultural engagement. The result was a more assimilated and syncretized mainline Charismatic theology and praxis, and the need for new labels and definitions. Neo-Pentecostals generally put less emphasis on glossolalia. It was not normative for salvation nor Christian growth.¹⁰⁷ Many did not adopt the eschatological convictions of 'classical' Pentecostalism, instead

¹⁰³ McDonnell, *Charismatic Renewal and the Churches*, 74.

¹⁰⁴ McDonnell, 74–75.

¹⁰⁵ Hunt, *A History of the Charismatic Movement in Britain and the United States of America: The Pentecostal Transformation of Christianity*, 207.

¹⁰⁶ Hunt, 164.

¹⁰⁷ McDonnell, *Charismatic Renewal and the Churches*, 44.

emphasizing personal and corporate refreshing and renewal. Essentially, effort was made to contextualize Charismatic theology and praxis within each denomination's theological emphases, rituals and practices making the movement more routinized and institutionalized.¹⁰⁸

3.5 The Response of Presbyterian Churches

While McDonnell reads the Presbyterian denominational statements as the most pastorally sensitivity, thorough and theologically nuanced and Hunt sees the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches as the most vehement critics of Renewal, many of the debates and overall reception depended on the particular congregation in its local context. While George "Brick" Bradford, pastor of First Presbyterian Church, El Reno was tried and fired by his church and presbytery,¹⁰⁹ James Brown, pastor of Octorara Presbyterian Church in Pennsylvania was able to create an ecumenical Charismatic movement within his traditional Presbyterian church while remaining active and influential at various levels of denominational leadership.¹¹⁰ This diversity makes normative conclusions tenuous. Various divisions within the wider Reformed tradition over a number of issues separate from Charismatic theology and praxis only add to the complexity.

A report in the late 1960s conducted within the then Presbyterian Church of the United States demonstrates some of the more typical concerns within Reformed churches. It argued the Word and Sacraments were sufficient for demonstration and experience of spiritual gifts thus diminishing the need for Charismatic experience. The report cited documents from the historical Reformation period prohibiting prayers in

¹⁰⁸ Hunt, *A History of the Charismatic Movement in Britain and the United States of America: The Pentecostal Transformation of Christianity*, 76.

¹⁰⁹ Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901-2001*, 170.

¹¹⁰ Synan, 169.

Latin to argue audible prayers needed to be in a language the congregation understood, thus excluding tongues-speaking from corporate settings. Glossolalia was viewed with suspicion as a negative influence, which needed to be carefully controlled. Central in this concern was the importance of the rational mind and analytical faculties in the worship of God.¹¹¹

As with the general trend across the historic churches, later Presbyterian statements shifted to focus on the work of the Spirit more broadly rather than troubleshooting current tensions and divisions. Presbyterian emphasis on Christian liberty and freedom of conscience gave room for Charismatic expression, so long as it was not destructive to peace and order.¹¹² The general call was for charity and Christian love expressed in tolerance towards those with different religious experiences than one's own.

In the midst of denominational debates, it is important to note the development of para-church ministries. Charismatics were by and large a minority culture in their congregations and developed networks of support and encouragement within their particularly denominations, as well as cross-denominationally. “Brick” Bradford, mentioned above, and five other Presbyterian pastors formed the Presbyterian Charismatic Communion in May 1966 (now Presbyterian Reformed Ministries International¹¹³), the first of its kind in mainline denominations. The organization provided support to ministers facing sanction and legal battles, encouragement for pastors and ‘lay’ leaders in the Renewal, and training resources.¹¹⁴ Organizations like these became a clearinghouse for various forms of literature focused on Charismatic

¹¹¹ McDonnell, *Charismatic Renewal and the Churches*, 55.

¹¹² McDonnell, 53.

¹¹³ <http://prmi.org>

¹¹⁴ Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901-2001*, 171–73.

renewal--the majority written by practitioners for pastors and laypeople in the movement.

The most noted scholars from within the Reformed tradition focused on Renewal were J. Rodman Williams and Dale Bruner. A systematic theologian and Charismatic Presbyterian, Williams served as an apologist of the Renewal for many who trusted theological and biblical reflection in their discernment of Charismatic experience.¹¹⁵ Bruner, a biblical scholar, was positive about the missional fervour of Pentecostals, but critical of Pentecostal doctrines based on exegesis of the New Testament.¹¹⁶ Historians also note the influence of John MacKay, president of Princeton Seminary from 1936-1959, and his ecumenical work with Pentecostal leader David du Plessis.¹¹⁷ These scholars are part of a larger group across mainline denominations who were engaging with the Charismatic Renewal from various fields and disciplines, particularly biblical studies and systematic theology.¹¹⁸

3.6 Charismatic Renewal: In Decline or Transition?

Scholars generally agree that a shift happened in the Charismatic movement toward the end of the 1970s into the 1980s. Some, like Hunt, frame it as the end of the Charismatic Renewal. Others, like Kay and Dyer describe a gradual shift as more independent churches and ministries entered the religious marketplace becoming “unnecessary competitors” with Charismatic Renewal and ‘classical’ Pentecostal

¹¹⁵ J. Rodman (John Rodman) Williams, *Renewal Theology : Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996).

¹¹⁶ Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit: The Pentecostal Experience and the New Testament Witness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970).

¹¹⁷ Curlee and Isaac-Curlee, “Bridging the Gap: John A. Mackay, Presbyterians, and the Charismatic Movement.” *American Presbyterians* 72, no. 3 (1994): 141-156.

¹¹⁸ See Russell P. Spittler, *Perspectives on the New Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976). See also *Strange Gifts? : A Guide to Charismatic Renewal* (Oxford: Oxford : Blackwell, 1984). Or, for theological reflection: Thomas A. Smail, Andrew Walker, and Nigel G. Wright, *Charismatic Renewal: The Search for a Theology* (London: SPCK, 1993).

churches.¹¹⁹ McClymond, Hunt and others, mark the high point of the Renewal with the 1977 Kansas City Conference, an ecumenical gathering of over 45,000 Charismatics. Described as an unprecedented gathering, it would never be repeated on the same scale. For Synan, change in the movement is acknowledged, but not necessarily decline. He cites multiple large, ecumenical Charismatic gatherings after the 1977 conference¹²⁰ suggesting a shift to a new normal for those within mainline congregations alongside the growing number of independent churches, ministries and revival movements.

For McClymond this is part of general pattern of renewal movements historically, where they may “lose momentum and focus over time”¹²¹ and need renewal themselves. Like a battery depleted, these movements need recharging. “On this basis, we might say that charismatic renewal is not an historical epoch, or a finished process, but an on-going and indeed permanent challenge.”¹²² McClymond also observes that while the Charismatic Renewal appeared to be fading in the United States it was during this period that Pentecostalism began to explode in growth globally.

As with theories about Pentecostal origins, growth and development, much depends on how each scholar defines terms, frames the historical narrative, derives statistics and interprets events. Hunt’s tendency is to look for consistency and stability. If the Charismatic Renewal doesn’t continue to show signs of numeric growth, the movement’s own hopes appear unfulfilled. If there is too much change from the origins of the movement, this signals decline. An anticipated large-scale revival never

¹¹⁹ *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies : A Reader*, xxiv.

¹²⁰ Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901-2001*, 366.

¹²¹ McClymond, “Charismatic Renewal and Neo-Pentecostalism,” 45.

¹²² McClymond, 45.

occurred. Disagreement and division was widespread among Renewalists. So, for Hunt, the Charismatic Renewal was short lived.¹²³ Claims of impact to Christendom as a whole were relative to the growth of non-Charismatic evangelical and fundamentalist churches in the U.S.¹²⁴ The Renewal failed to reach outside its middle class, suburban contexts to working class and poor inner city communities.¹²⁵ While Hunt acknowledges accurate numbers are hard to come by, in his assessment the movement stalled.

As Charismatic Renewal became more routinized and institutionalized in mainline denominations, the growth of independent churches offered new vibrancy. One could now express Charismatic theology and praxis without participating in Charismatic Renewal or traditional Pentecostal churches. So, a more united, formal and in some sense exclusive movement was no longer needed to support Charismatic spirituality.¹²⁶ In short, the Charismatic movement, in the context of the wider Pentecostal movement in America, was evolving, and, as argued in this study, in some cases taking the form of an overlooked hybrid minority subgroup within mainline denominations.

3.7 Charismatic Movement 1980s – 2018

Scholars studying American Charismatic spirituality after the 1980s focus outside of mainline denominations, looking at the impact of independent churches and ministries as well the America's place in the wider global picture. Rapid expansion globally has also brought diverse change in the Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition,

¹²³ Hunt, *A History of the Charismatic Movement in Britain and the United States of America: The Pentecostal Transformation of Christianity*, 154.

¹²⁴ Hunt, 238.

¹²⁵ Hunt, 203–4.

¹²⁶ Hunt, 243.

which has hindered scholarly clarity and consensus.¹²⁷ Efforts to track general trends and tell a more cohesive narrative sound superficial and reductionist. This exposes the need for more contextual and ethnographic study, rare in the American context. As Hunt concludes, “No doctoral thesis of note has documented the experiences of the Renewal movement in the USA in recent times.”¹²⁸

Two particular areas of scholarship are highlighted below. The first are studies on independent churches and ministries. Second is scholarship focused on recent ‘revivals’ in the North American context. A thorough review of the literature in these areas is not offered, as it falls outside of the main focus of this study on Reformed Charismatics. That said, in today’s current religious landscape, these independent ministries and movements have impacted individual Reformed Charismatics and their churches. Just like the healing evangelists of the 1940’s through 1960’s, cited by many scholars for their role in bringing Pentecostalism into mainline churches, these independent churches and ministries are influencing Reformed Charismatics through their training material, relational networks, itinerants and conferences.

Independent or non-denominational churches and ministries are not unprecedented in the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement. For Hocken, they follow naturally from the many independent church splits of ‘classical’ Pentecostalism.¹²⁹ It was common for pastors removed from their positions in mainline churches to function as independent itinerants. On the margins of established churches, movements like the ‘Jesus People’ have had a noticeable impact. Neither mainline renewalists nor aligned

¹²⁷ Walker, “Thoroughly Modern: Sociological Reflections on the Charismatic Movement from the End of the Twentieth Century,” 33.

¹²⁸ Hunt, *A History of the Charismatic Movement in Britain and the United States of America: The Pentecostal Transformation of Christianity*, 239.

¹²⁹ Hocken et al., *The Challenges of the Pentecostal, Charismatic and Messianic Jewish Movements: The Tensions of the Spirit*, 29.

with ‘classical’ Pentecostalism, these independent ministries became for scholars a new form of Charismatic expression requiring further definition and delineating criteria.¹³⁰

No American independent church has likely been studied more than the Vineyard, and its founder John Wimber. Miller includes the Vineyard in his ethnographic exploration of “new paradigm churches” which he argues are reinventing American Christianity.¹³¹ Albrecht includes the Vineyard in studying ritual in Pentecostal-Charismatic spirituality.¹³² Luhrmann uses Vineyard churches in her analysis of evangelical belief in an intimate God who “talks back”, explored more in chapter six.¹³³

The events surrounding the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship (TACF) during the mid-1990s, while not the only ‘Charismatic revival’ in the last thirty years in North America, received significant attention from pilgrims, the Christian church globally, news media and scholars. As described in later chapters, TACF impacted the Presbyterian congregation in focus in this study. Chevreau functioned as a resident theologian of sorts within the movement, reflecting on its teaching and events beyond the writings of practitioners and participants.¹³⁴ Poloma provides substantial analysis in multiple publications as a sympathetic sociologist.¹³⁵ Hilborn edited a collection of

¹³⁰ Walker, “Thoroughly Modern: Sociological Reflections on the Charismatic Movement from the End of the Twentieth Century,” 32.

¹³¹ Donald E. (Donald Earl) Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism : Christianity in the New Millennium* (Berkeley, Calif.: Berkeley, Calif., 1997).

¹³² Daniel E Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit : A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic Spirituality*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology. Supplement Series (Sheffield: Sheffield : Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

¹³³ T. M. (Tanya M.) Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back : Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*, 1st Vintage books ed. (New York: New York : Vintage Books, 2012).

¹³⁴ Guy Chevreau, *Catch the Fire: The Toronto Blessing : An Experience of Renewal and Revival* (Toronto: HarperPerennial, 1994).

¹³⁵ Margaret Poloma, *Main Street Mystics: The Toronto Blessing and Reviving Pentecostalism* (Altamira Press, 2003).

essays critiquing the ‘Toronto Blessing’ from an evangelical perspective.¹³⁶ And both Percy¹³⁷ and Walker¹³⁸ offer critical analysis—to name just a few scholars. Missing, again, is contextual ethnographic study of TACF’s impact on particular congregations like Central Presbyterian.

3.8 Charismatic Movement: A Charismatic theology and praxis?

Scholars have attempted to trace common characteristics and a unifying theology and praxis among Pentecostalism(s) globally. James KA Smith engages this question, seeking to philosophically articulate a Pentecostal worldview¹³⁹. Smith’s perspective is explored in chapter five in an effort to more clearly distinguish Pentecostal and Reformed culture. J. Johns examines the epistemological tendencies of Pentecostals, seeing important similarities to Frierie’s model of praxis.¹⁴⁰ H. Gooren analyses the conversion testimonies of Charismatics over time exploring the key role of storytelling in shaping culture.¹⁴¹ These are just a few examples of a wider

¹³⁶ “Toronto” in *Perspective : Papers on the New Charismatic Wave of the Mid-1990’s* (Carlisle: Carlisle : Acute, 2001).

¹³⁷ Martyn Percy, *Engaging with Contemporary Culture : Christianity, Theology and the Concrete Church.*, Explorations in Practical, Pastoral, and Empirical Theology (Aldershot, Hants ; Burlington, Vt. : Ashgate, c2005., 2005).

¹³⁸ Walker, “Thoroughly Modern: Sociological Reflections on the Charismatic Movement from the End of the Twentieth Century.”

¹³⁹ For an historical overview of the concept and use of worldview see: David K Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002). For an example of worldview analysis in missiological studies see: Paul G Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Baker Academic, 2008). Droogers argues for the use of worldview in religious studies in A. F. Droogers and Anton van Harskamp, *Methods for the Study of Religious Change : From Religious Studies to Worldview Studies* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2014). This study prefers the concept of culture and cultural analysis over use of the concept of worldview.

¹⁴⁰ Jackie David Johns, “Yielding to the Spirit: The Dynamics of a Pentecostal Model of Praxis,” in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism : A Religion Made to Travel* (Carlisle: Carlisle : Regnum Books International, 1999), 71.

¹⁴¹ Henri Paul Pierre Gooren, “Conversion Narratives,” in *Studying Global Pentecostalism : Theories and Methods*, Anthropology of Christianity (Berkeley, Calif.: Berkeley, Calif., 2010).

conversation exploring what unifies Pentecostals in the midst of all their diversity. Is there a universal Pentecostal-Charismatic theology and praxis discernable in all of its ‘glocal’ forms? As Klaus argues:

Pentecostalism has been the quintessential indigenous religion, adapting readily to a variety of cultures [...] In another sense, it can be argued that while regional differences are real, Pentecostalism has generated a global culture which shares a common spirituality.¹⁴²

Attention also needs to be given to ‘glocal’ forms at a denominational and congregational level. This is particularly relevant for Reformed Charismatics. What is the impact of being a minority with perspectives and practices that are distinct from the dominant norms of a faith community? How do Charismatics in historic churches cultivate a hybrid theology from two distinct ecclesial cultures?

3.9 Filling A Gap: Reformed Charismatics

These and other questions fall under the main research question described in the outset of this literature review: what influences Reformed reception of Charismatic theology and praxis? What does this demonstrate about the influence of Pentecostalism more broadly? As highlighted throughout the review, there is a need for further study of Charismatic reception in mainline churches in America, particularly through engaging with the experiences and perspectives of ‘ordinary mainline Charismatic theologians’. Scholars have focused more on historical analysis of Charismatic Renewal, or biblical, theological and doctrinal concerns from a Reformed perspective.

The use of ethnographic methods has become more common in Pentecostal-Charismatic studies, particularly globally. Such studies within the American context rarely focus on mainline Protestant denominations. An exception is Warner’s study on

¹⁴² Byron D Klaus, “Pentecostalism as a Global Culture: An Introductory Overview,” in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel*, ed. Murray W Dempster, Byron D Klaus, and Douglas Petersen (Carlisle: Regnum Books International, 1999), 175.

Mendocino Presbyterian church during the 1970s. But his interaction with Reformed Charismatics is not central. Instead he offers a congregational study designed to address broader questions related to trends in American religion. His work and relevant insights on nascent groups are explored further in chapter six.

This study aims to fill a gap in scholarship through empirical theological reflection on Reformed Charismatics, specifically in the Presbyterian Church (USA). A theological ethnographic study of ‘ordinary Presbyterian Charismatics’ offers key insights into Pentecostal influence broadly. It may also aid practitioners working with this particular subgroup and add to a growing number of studies examining Pentecostal-Charismatic spirituality in its various, diverse contextual forms all toward broader understanding of Charismatic spirituality, its development and its impact.

Chapter 2: **Theological use of Culture – In Search of Ordinary Theology**

The bulk of this chapter is focused on laying the theoretical groundwork for using ethnography to access ‘ordinary theology’. A working definition of culture and approaches to cultural analysis are explored by way of an historical overview of pre-modern, modern and postmodern notions of culture. Focus is on the impact of postmodern critique of cultural analysis on theological reflection. Theoretical assumptions are then applied to the main research questions of this study.

4 THEOLOGIES TURN TO CULTURE: CULTURE AND THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Cultural analysis is apparent in various forms in theology. Contextual theology emphasizes the significance of difference across cultures and the role of the social group in shaping theological perspectives and approaches. Liberation theology prioritizes ordinary theological reflection, particularly marginalized perspectives, toward concrete action and social transformation. Practical, or empirical, theology gives attention to praxis as well as ideas, attending to the lived and often local, particular theology of everyday life.

Tanner and Fulkerson argue for making cultural analysis even more explicit in theological reflection. For Fulkerson, Christians, particularly when they are engaged in social criticism, need to clearly define what is meant by culture and often do not do this adequately. “I assume that the way a position understands culture is at least as important as how it envisions God’s end for the Christian life.”¹⁴³ For Tanner,

¹⁴³ Mary McClintock Fulkerson, “Toward a Materialist Christian Social Criticism: Accommodation and Culture Reconsidered,” in *Changing Conversations : Religious Reflection & Cultural Analysis*, ed. Dwight N. Hopkins and Sheila Greeve Davaney (New York: Routledge, 1996), 44.

postmodern anthropological notions of culture are a dynamic resource for theology.¹⁴⁴ The influence of culture is often assumed or intuitively incorporated, but not fully explored. She builds her case through an historical account of the development of primarily anthropological notions of culture and implications this has for theological reflection and debates about Christian identity. This section will follow Tanner's historical reconstruction of shifts in how culture has been viewed and analysed, from pre-modern perspectives to modern and now postmodern critiques. Again the aim, and relevance for this study, is not to delve primarily into debates on defining and analysing culture, but how Reformed Charismatic theology and praxis operates in the midst of theological differences with both the Reformed and Pentecostal traditions. What follows sets the theoretical framework for the theological, not cultural, analysis of Reformed Charismatics in this study.

Throughout academic study of human society, there has been an understanding that humans have different perspectives and approaches to ways of life. What has changed, argues Tanner, is not just what is meant by culture, but particular explanations for cultural difference. Prior to what Tanner refers to as modern anthropological notions of culture, difference was evaluated by various naturalist explanations, whether sovereignly ordained by God or related to biological factors.¹⁴⁵ Certain cultural norms were viewed as superior not based on preference, but on being 'more advanced' or even righteous.

This evaluative view of culture is exemplified in the notion of 'high culture'. Rather than distinct "linguistic skills, tastes and thought patterns"¹⁴⁶ received from the social group one was born and socialized into, culture is the best ideas, best practices

¹⁴⁴ Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture : A New Agenda for Theology*, Guides to Theological Inquiry (Minneapolis: Minneapolis : Fortress Press, 1997).

¹⁴⁵ Tanner, 3.

¹⁴⁶ Tanner, 14.

and best products of humanity. One becomes a 'cultured individual' by exposure to and fluency in the primarily "intellectual, artistic and spiritual achievements"¹⁴⁷ of a society. This process of refinement is primarily individualistic and by degree--one can be more or less 'cultured'. Thus, a society has a cultured elite with disproportionate power over distribution of resources and the establishment and enforcement of norms. This notion of a 'cultured individual' or 'high culture' elite was coupled with a concept of a 'cultured society,' emphasizing a corporate sense of progress. A civilization advances not merely in terms of intellectual achievements, but also in its social practices, customs and institutions. This was often framed in an evolutionary sense of progress from primitive societies, variously defined, to more advanced civilizations.

The 1920's, argues Tanner, marked a shift to what she broadly terms modern anthropological notions of culture. Culture is something everyone of a particular society shares. Social groups are seen as separate units, most often as distinct geopolitical groups. Any differences between individuals within the same social group are attributed to diverse factors other than culture. Nature is inherent, universal and explains many of the similarities among humans. For example, all humans need to eat for survival, but why humans consume certain foods, prohibit others and prepare food in different ways is explained through the concept of culture.

Unlike pre-modern notions, culture is foundational to human identity, belief and action. It is not particular best ideas and practices of a society only some have the opportunity to be exposed to, toward refinement of the individual or even wider society. Instead it is the very building blocks of human life.

Human beings get from culture all the shape, form and definiteness their actions manifest. Culture is therefore not talked about as redirecting or constraining already-established behaviours, with clearly defined goals and underlying interests—not talked about as redirecting or constraining, say, the rapacious and

¹⁴⁷ Tanner, 9.

wilful inclinations of the profligate and unrefined. If culture works on anything, it works on bare animal or bodily based capacities with an extensive and indefinite range of possible outcomes.¹⁴⁸

Priority is on the ideational over the material elements of human life. The modern anthropologist observes behaviours and the creation and utilization of various objects toward discerning the underlying meaning of symbols and symbolic actions.

Modern notions frame culture holistically in two important ways. First, the beliefs, actions and products that distinguish one culture from another are viewed comprehensively together, which as a whole bring social order and the cohesion necessary for a society to function and survive. There is a pattern or interrelated system of meaning that runs throughout a society, weaving and uniting together all the elements into a cohesive way of life.

The oddity or apparent nonsensicality of a particular belief or value is dispelled when the anthropologist considers it in relation to the rest of the culture and, usually also, with reference to the context of group behaviours in which it is situated.¹⁴⁹

So, a part is understood in the context of the whole.

Second, these beliefs, actions and products are equally shared across the whole population of a respective culture. Although diversity is accounted for within a group, what defines a social group is cultural consensus. There is room for subgroups or subcultures within a society, but individual members will still share common, foundational norms across the society. For example, the upper and lower socio-economic class of France is seen as sharing one culture, although experiencing a different lifestyle within this culture. Whereas the American upper class and French upper class are distinct cultures.

¹⁴⁸ Tanner, 27–28.

¹⁴⁹ Tanner, 34.

Rather than the by-product of an inevitable natural or ordained process, culture is a human creation, pliable, and subject to critique and change. However, individual agency is limited in the modern view of culture, at least initially. Prior to any individual confrontation and modification of societal norms, one inherits and is socialized into a particular culture. Any innovations or unique appropriations are themselves contingent on working within the constraints of one's received culture.

These modern shifts in understanding culture are sustained through postmodern critique, but subject to some important revision. Cultures are seen as more fragmented while still whole, permeable while still distinct social groups and in flux rather than stable through a process of internal conflict and external influence marked by negotiation of unequal relations of power. Agency, subjectivity and plurality are emphasized, with particular attention given to marginalized and minority perspectives. Each of these postmodern shifts is relevant in the study of Reformed Charismatics as a theological subgroup.

With pre-modern notions of culture, emphasis was on the best ideas, practices and products, the 'high culture' of a civilization. For modern perspectives emphasis shifts to agreement across all members of a group. In postmodern notions,

culture now is viewed as the dynamic and contentious process by which meaning, and with it power, is produced, circulated, and negotiated by all who reside within a particular cultural milieu¹⁵⁰

This cultural milieu is much more fluid, open and contested, no longer bound together simply by agreement nor distinguished from other cultures based on disagreement alone.

¹⁵⁰ Sheila Greeve Davaney, "Theology and the Turn to Cultural Analysis," in *Converging on Culture : Theologians in Dialogue with Cultural Analysis and Criticism*, Reflection and Theory in the Study of Religion (Oxford: Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2001), 5.

Culture never appears as a whole for the participants in it. No one is likely to know it all and the whole of it is never mobilized on any particular occasion. Only bits of culture appear at any one time according to the dictates of a situation and the various interests of the actors in it.¹⁵¹

Postmodern critique calls into question the social determinism of modern notions of culture. Boundaries between cultures are viewed as porous and scholars offer other criterion to delineate between groups.¹⁵² For example, in the midst of substantial disagreement about what it means to be an American, those within American culture are united in working out, and practically living out, what it means to be American. Someone with a different nationality, it is argued, will not be as concerned about American identity, giving more attention to her or his own social group. Shared identity and a shared culture then is a common effort to make sense of culture within a particular social group. They are united in their culture making, meaning making, even though they may disagree on meaning. Such postmodern critique also opens up the possibility for individual membership within multiple, distinct cultures, whether seen as subcultures within a larger common culture or a constant, fluid renegotiation of cultural boundaries. This creates much more ambiguity around questions of identity and unity.

Thus, general, normative statements about the culture of a social group are viewed with suspicion. Attention is given to the particular. If cultures are not consistent wholes, a survey of a few or the insights of an informant are no longer capable of providing insights for the whole. This requires a change in method to focus on the particular.

With this, modern anthropologists tended to study cultures synchronically. The historical development of beliefs, practices and products were not deemed necessary in

¹⁵¹ Tanner, *Theories of Culture : A New Agenda for Theology*, 42.

¹⁵² Tanner, 57.

discerning the whole way of life of a society in its current form. Historicists critique this approach as limiting. It is a naïve overcorrection of pre-modern evolutionary and evaluative views of culture and still under the influence of a ‘high culture’ perspective. Solely focusing on synchronic analysis may simplify the study of a social group and side-step challenging epistemological and methodological issues with historical reconstruction, but it comes with the liability of distorted interpretation. Focusing on the product, rather than process of production, prioritizes the advancements or achievements of the social group, the ‘elite culture’, over historically marginalized influences that may not be as apparent in a social group’s current beliefs, praxis and products.

Contra modern emphasis on belief shaping action,

Increasingly influential now are materialist theories of culture that stress not only the intimate interconnection between ideational forms of culture and nondiscursive social realities but also emphasize that meaning is constructed and produced in non-linguistic and nondiscursive modes, in social practices and relations, in everything from ritual and the circulation of economic resources, in the valorization of certain bodies and in the absence and invisibility of other bodies, in the construction of public and private spaces, and in the seeming reign of image over idea and surface over substance.¹⁵³

While the creation of a product or a particular practice may come from the culturally shaped ideas of individuals within a group, that product or praxis will in turn shape new perspectives, beliefs and possibilities.

Crouch offers such a materialist view of culture, emphasizing the centrality of concrete actions and artefacts. He uses the example of the interstate highway system in America. It “was not just the result of a worldview, it was the source of a new way of viewing the world.”¹⁵⁴ Once created and used in people’s everyday life, the interstate highway system had consequences the original creators likely never anticipated. It

¹⁵³ Davaney, “Theology and the Turn to Cultural Analysis,” 6.

¹⁵⁴ Andy Crouch, *Culture Making : Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Downers Grove, Ill. : IVP Books, 2008), 64.

rerouted a flow of commerce and community away from prior slower routes of travel, cultivated a commuter lifestyle, facilitated the development of suburban communities while radically altering inner cities, and changed the environmental landscape and ozone layer.¹⁵⁵

In modern anthropology, ethnocentric “value-laden notions of truth, beauty, and goodness have no absolute standing”¹⁵⁶. Through various methods, effort is made to minimize bias and distortion, to access accurate information about what a social group may not be able to perceive about themselves and their way of life. In postmodern critique, particular attention is given to the cultural presuppositions of the researcher. Reflexivity is an important element throughout the analytical process. This includes increased recognition of power differentials between the researcher and those she studies and how this shapes perceptions. This subjectivity and bias does not have to be a liability in cultural analysis. Increasingly, the properly framed research of an insider is seen as valid and valuable.

Postmodern critique also focuses attention on the influence of power within a social group. Beliefs, actions and products are seen as a source of conflict played out in a negotiation of unequal relations of power.¹⁵⁷ Concern is that modern notions of culture blind scholars to the influence of power, by for example misreading willing consensus.

At least some members of society may be simply going along with and acting in accordance with dominant beliefs or values for lack of other options, without giving them much credence or believing in their legitimacy.”¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Crouch, 199.

¹⁵⁶ Tanner, *Theories of Culture : A New Agenda for Theology*, 37.

¹⁵⁷ Davaney, “Theology and the Turn to Cultural Analysis,” 5.

¹⁵⁸ Tanner, *Theories of Culture : A New Agenda for Theology*, 46.

Also, power is not just in the hands of an elite minority. All contribute to the construction and interpretation of the culture of a group, but with different levels of influence and access to power.

This claim has particular relevance for the interpretation of more marginalized groups in a society, for it suggests that they are not passive recipients of the cultural productions of the elites and the powerful but are instead active and creative agents involved in ongoing struggles to shape their identities and roles.¹⁵⁹

Along the margins, in places of conflict and resistance, a self-conscious dialogue over cultural forms and meaning is playing out offering insights, albeit provisionally, about the wider culture and multiple conflicting subgroups. Further, power can be a resource for positive social change. Certain, more activist streams within Cultural Studies have encouraged leveraging current structures and systems to empower the marginalized in a social group.¹⁶⁰ Rather than with modern tendencies to minimize or even exclude minority voices, in postmodern notions of culture they are given priority as a source of dynamic culture making.

5 IMPACT ON THEOLOGY ANALYSIS IN THIS STUDY

Building on the shifts described above, this section explores the impact of postmodern notions of culture on theology and the methodology of this study. There is a sense of walking through a minefield of highly contested issues from the validity and role of the theology itself to debates about theory, method and interdisciplinary conversation partners. What follows is an effort to walk an intentionally laid out path through these contested areas, sidestepping issues not directly relevant to the research while arguing for the particular assumptions, theoretical frameworks and interdisciplinary conversation partners used in this study.

¹⁵⁹ Dwight N. Hopkins and Sheila Greeve Davaney, *Changing Conversations : Religious Reflection & Cultural Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 257.

¹⁶⁰ Davaney, "Theology and the Turn to Cultural Analysis," 6–7.

5.1 Theology is Constructed

Theology doesn't stand outside of culture as a separate and distinct. 'Religious' belief, praxis and products are an integrated part of a whole way of life. Just as culture is a social construct, so is theological reflection. This assumption touches on a myriad of debates related to doctrines of revelation, epistemology, Christian identity, Christian interaction with 'secular' society and the adequacy of methods of inquiry related to the social sciences. These debates are addressed further in the following chapter on methodology.

Reformed Charismatics consistently hold alternative interpretations of the shared experiences of their wider congregational community. While participating in the same rituals, impacted by the same communal influences and generally under the same leadership and teaching, this subgroup cultivates a different theology and praxis than the majority. They have constructed, in many ways, a hybrid theology, merging two faith traditions.

5.2 Focus on the Particular

Theology is contextual, created or re-appropriated to apply to the concerns of a particular social group, and sub-groups within them. Reflection in this study is not on universal, normative claims that transcend culture. This doesn't mean there aren't

universal implications for particular perspectives. As Tanner observes,

Because theology operates within a Christian context is no reason to think theologians are discussing matters that only concern Christians. Theologians can proclaim truths with profound ramifications for whole human existence; that they do so from within a Christian cultural context simply means that the

claims they make are shaped by that context and are put forward from a Christian point of view.¹⁶¹

From a postmodern perspective on culture, this is the only way universal normative claims are produced.

Focus on particularity touches on substantial theological debates about Christian identity. In all the diversity across (and within) traditions and social groups and all the apparent similarities between those who self-identify as Christians and those who do not, is there a normative, essential, common Christian identity? Are there particular doctrines, particular experiences, particular praxis that is particularly Christian?

Lindbeck, in *The Nature of Doctrine*, comes at the issue of Christian identity as an ecumenist aiming to offer a different way of understanding religions to aid denominations in finding agreement without “capitulation for doctrinal reconciliation”.¹⁶² Rather than a cognitive propositional approach, where doctrines are normative truth claims requiring agreement for unity, or what Lindbeck calls an expressive-experiential approach focused on common religious experiences in the midst of diversity, he proposes seeing religion through cultural-linguistic theory. Doctrines function as “communally authoritative rules of discourse, attitude, and action”¹⁶³ within a faith community. Disagreement about rules, for Lindbeck, does not require changing them, but is more a process of negotiating precedence and priority as to when and how the rules are applied. Per postliberal theology, issues around Christian identity are framed through seeing Christianity itself as a culture.

¹⁶¹ Tanner, *Theories of Culture : A New Agenda for Theology*, 69.

¹⁶² George A Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine : Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, 25th anniversary edition. (Louisville: Louisville : Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 15–16.

¹⁶³ Lindbeck, 18.

For Tanner, Christian identity is found in disagreement. After an extended postmodern critique of various perspectives on Christian identity, she settles on the significance of common concern.

What unites Christian practices is not, then, agreement about the beliefs and actions that constitute true discipleship; but a shared sense of the importance of figuring it out.¹⁶⁴

This common concern and common task is marked by argument. If you are concerned about trying to figure out what it is to be a true disciple of Jesus, argues Tanner, you are a Christian.

Many examples could be given of different approaches to determining Christian identity, and the impact of cultural analysis on these debates. However, like questions of Christian interaction with secular society or theology as a cultural construct, Christian identity is not a primary concern for this particular research project. Issues of common identity in the midst of particularity come up in chapter five in differentiating Reformed and Charismatic theology. For example, what makes someone Reformed or Charismatic? Or more specifically what distinguishes or identifies a Reformed Charismatic? But, primary focus is on describing Reformed Charismatics as a minority theological subgroup who consistently negotiate conflict over their particular theology and praxis.

5.3 Focus on Everyday and Ordinary Theology

With this focus on the particular and contextual, theological inquiry shifts from analysis solely of ‘high culture’ forms to ordinary beliefs and everyday social actions. Although an over-simplification, there are four characteristics of ‘high culture’ theology. First, theology is done by primarily intellectual elites such as academics and academically trained practitioners. Second theology is often presented in the form of

¹⁶⁴ Tanner, *Theories of Culture : A New Agenda for Theology*, 153.

either writings with a specialized vocabulary, “in which conceptual precision and logical coherence are at a premium”¹⁶⁵ or the ‘ordained’ or ‘anointed’ perspectives of elite practitioners expressed in sermons, popular religious books or other forms of media. Third, academic theological literature is

produced in primary conversation with other writings of a similar sort, and they tend to be read only by people with the same educational background and institutional support for sustained intellectual pursuits as their authors¹⁶⁶

Fourth, this elite theological praxis is presented as the authoritative interpretation of authoritative texts or the best ideas, people, praxis and products of church tradition.

This ‘high culture’ approach to theology is critiqued, or at least complimented, by broadening the definition of theology to incorporate ‘ordinary theology’. At a minimum, everyday belief and praxis becomes a subject of academic theological reflection. But, further, ordinary theological reflection, the theoretical assumptions and methods of those doing theology with no specialized training, is not diminished, nor exclusively prioritized. Instead, as a valid and dynamic form of theological reflection, it is acknowledged for its role in shaping theological norms. What it is, how it works, how it relates to academic theology and issues related to its analysis are explored more fully in chapter three.

Academic theology is limited in engaging with the lived experience of Reformed Charismatics. As will be demonstrated, theological clashes between Reformed Charismatics and their wider congregations are rarely resolved through doctrinal debates or biblical interpretation. Both ‘high culture’ scholarship and ‘low culture’ ordinary theology are influenced by presuppositions driving interpretive frameworks. Yet, scholarship plays a role and is highly valued within the Reformed tradition, revered among Reformed Charismatics and the wider congregation of Central

¹⁶⁵ Tanner, *Theories of Culture : A New Agenda for Theology*.

¹⁶⁶ Tanner.

Presbyterian alike. Thus, like Reformed Charismatics themselves do, this study puts the academic and ordinary on level footing and in mutual dialogue.

5.4 Subjectivity of the Theologian

Viewing theology as contextual and constructed highlights the role of theologians themselves. Objective or normative claims to religious knowledge are suspect. It is becoming more common, as in anthropology, to acknowledge one's cultural identity, location and particular agendas, at a minimum taking responsibility for their influence on analysis and even embracing subjectivity for the possible benefits of 'insider' perspectives.

P. Ward provides an example of a form of reflexivity he terms "Auto/theobiography"¹⁶⁷. In the introduction to *Participation and Mediation: A Practical Theology for the Liquid Church*,¹⁶⁸ he provides autobiographical narrative of his vocational, intellectual and faith journey. He highlights key moments, experiences, conversation partners, and questions which are elaborated on further in the body of the text. Per Ward, "theology grows out of a particular personal history, social context and theological tradition"¹⁶⁹. Because there is no God's eye view, methodological efforts toward achieving objectivity are counter-productive. For Ward, theology is embodied in a dynamic process of participation with and mediation of the triune God who is present and active in the world. Thus, theological reflection is committed, relational, cultural and experiential. "So auto/theobiography generates practical theology that is culturally located but it is at the same time theologically committed."¹⁷⁰ In this way

¹⁶⁷ Pete Ward, *Participation and Mediation : A Practical Theology for the Liquid Church* (London: SCM, 2008), 4.

¹⁶⁸ Ward, *Participation and Mediation : A Practical Theology for the Liquid Church*, 4.

¹⁶⁹ Ward, 4.

¹⁷⁰ Ward, 18.

Ward is not just acknowledging the influence of his subjectivity, but strategically embracing it.

Bill Smith pushes an autobiographical approach even further in his essay *Liberation as Risky Business*¹⁷¹. It is personal narrative throughout, in which Smith describes his experience as an African American homosexual man in often intimate, poignant detail. He is intentional about putting the personal and academic in conversation.

For me, cultural analysis and religious reflection are deeply incarnated in personal narrative. Therefore, on the one hand I write to explain and interpret, on the other I write to share my story. By hiding the full identity of the author, especially relating to sexuality, the academy and its language too often obscure the personal journey of the author. The form of this chapter is itself a conversation between the academy and soul of the street.¹⁷²

The result is compelling. Through vulnerable narration, Smith confronts the reader with alternative, often marginalized theological perspectives in a way that humanizes theological discourse and forces interaction with the messiness of everyday life.

My own personal experience as a Reformed Charismatic and particularly my eight years as a pastor at Central Presbyterian profoundly shape this research project. Rather than minimize perspectival subjectivity, strategies from autoethnography are used to leverage my ‘insider’ access to the church and reflect on my own experience. This includes acknowledging my own internal debates and insecurities about my own spirituality and sharing my perspectives and experiences with others. Two decades of specialized focus and first hand interaction with the Pentecostal and Reformed traditions are put into service in ethnographic analysis of what can prove an elusive subgroup.

¹⁷¹ Bill Smith, “Liberation Is Risky Business,” in *Changing Conversations : Religious Reflection & Cultural Analysis*, ed. Dwight N. Hopkins and Sheila Greeve Davaney (New York: Routledge, 1996), 207–34.

¹⁷² Smith, 232.

5.5 Material, not Just Ideational, Influence

Theology is shaped by ‘material’ aspects of life. Per Fulkerson, conservative critique of society (she labels Christianity versus Culture) and postliberal critique (Christianity as culture) are deficient in minimizing the impact of ‘material life’:

Both positions assume that Christian discourse and practice can be discussed apart from the social formations of the state, civil society and economy, and its intersection by global capitalism and its cultural formations. Or they assume that Christians can efface or transform the effects of these social forces with their ideas. Either way they fail to take secular culture seriously by treating it as easily defeated ideas/values that function without the determinations of advanced global capitalism or the political. As a consequence they fail to link the channelling of desire (and dispositions) by these omnipresent processes.¹⁷³

Fulkerson’s argument is exemplified in D. Batstone’s research on the impact of economic systems and particular forms of work on ordinary theological reflection. During a workshop with sixty Christian graduate students from the Bay Area of California, Batstone explored how their jobs influenced their understanding of God, community and their own identity. The students generally saw participation in traditional churches irrelevant to their lives. A majority had relocated to attend university and were in fields where employment was through two to three year contracts. These jobs focused on accomplishing a set project, usually involving rapidly changing technologies. It was rare to stay in one company beyond a contract period. Incorporating Marxist theories on economic social relations, Batstone argues that the fluidity of their work environment influenced their resistance to ecclesial institutions. “In order to meet their needs, the institution would have to be as fluid as their

¹⁷³ Fulkerson, “Toward a Materialist Christian Social Criticism: Accommodation and Culture Reconsidered,” 52–53.

lifestyles.”¹⁷⁴ But, churches were often “bound by historic traditions, conserving structures and, oft-times, set obligations”¹⁷⁵.

Further, the transience and independence of their jobs shaped their theological convictions. “There was a broad consensus that mobility, though stressful, set a positive condition for spiritual growth.”¹⁷⁶ The basic logic: because I cannot depend on people, I need to depend more on God. Although there was some dissent among the group regarding this perspective, contextual scriptural interpretation was offered to undergird the theological viewpoint. Batstone quotes a participant identified as a spokesperson among the group,

‘The Old Testament tells us that God punished the children of Israel whenever they put their trust in their own community rather than relying on God to meet their needs.’¹⁷⁷

For Batstone the connections are clear and striking. Realities created by specific jobs within a capitalist economic system were shaping these students and their particular theological perspectives.

Multiple aspects of culture influence Reformed Charismatic theology and praxis. Particular attention in this study is on the impact of cross cultural communication and tension. Such material influences are explored in chapter six in dialogue with Warner’s theories of the nascent and Luhmann’s observations of the impact of community on spirituality.

5.6 Attention to Power

Utilizing postmodern cultural analysis includes paying attention to the influence

¹⁷⁴ David Batstone, “Transcendence and Material Culture,” in *Changing Conversations : Religious Reflection & Cultural Analysis*, ed. Dwight N. Hopkins and Sheila Greeve Davaney (New York: Routledge, 1996), 69.

¹⁷⁵ Batstone, 69.

¹⁷⁶ Batstone, 69.

¹⁷⁷ Batstone, 69.

of power in theological reflection and praxis. As L. Cady argues,

Entrusting knowledge to the determination of the “experts,” whether medieval clergy or modern professors, is to risk allowing particular interests--vested in, for example, a particular gender, class, ethnicity, or nation—to control what counts for knowledge at any given time.¹⁷⁸

The producers, disseminators and enforcers of knowledge about God are positioned to make hegemonic claims through their power to shape culture.

For the purposes of this study, focus is on unequal relations of power within particular faith communities. This is evident in Reformed Charismatic navigation of social norms in settings like Sunday corporate worship. It is highlighted by interviewees as they describe navigating the disproportionate influence of staff in making decisions and enforcing debated norms. Yet, it is dynamic and nuanced as Reformed Charismatics are not a clearly unified or organized subgroup, not all stifled in their praxis and preferences and some are in positions of power within the congregation.

5.7 Theology on the Margins

Attention to power in theological reflection involves focus on marginalized perspectives. The identity and experience of the disenfranchised in any social group is dependent on context and can be diverse. For example, feminist theological efforts to address unequal relations of power based on gender are complicated by the diverse experience and perspectives of women. It can be important to distinguish white feminist theology from womanist, as well as other ethnicities, socio-economic statuses and even the perspectives of women who may not identify with feminist critique.

¹⁷⁸ Linell E. Cady, “Loosening the Category That Binds: Modern ‘Religion’ and The Promise of Cultural Studies,” in *Converging on Culture : Theologians in Dialogue with Cultural Analysis and Criticism*, Reflection and Theory in the Study of Religion (Oxford: Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2001), 20.

More narrowly, the same person can experience different levels of influence depending on the setting or even one's capacity to move across or within cultures. To keep with prior examples, the academic theologian can be viewed with deep suspicion within one social group, revered in another, or by only some members of a group. It can be difficult to clearly identify what is impacting the level of influence in a particular setting. Is it perceptions about academics? Are the particular views of the academic more an issue than her credentials, or even her personal reputation? How much is gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or age impacting her influence?

This is further complicated by whom and how the marginalized are given a voice. As L. Cady argues,

Any claim therefore to speak on behalf of the poor or to represent their culture must always be rendered transparent (i.e., made to reveal whose interest it represents and by what authority), not only because such claims often involve either assimilating the categories of the culture of the poor into the discursive universe of the elite [...] or imposing the categories of elite culture on the poor [...] but also because making the voice of the poor heard through the mediation of the elite requires acts of "position-taking" which represent political intervention.¹⁷⁹

Consideration is given to such concerns as this project seeks to give voice to the alternative, even subversive, theologizing of minority Reformed Charismatics.

There are a variety of approaches to interpreting the perspectives of those who are minimized in a social group and in theological reflection. As an example, Chopp

describes a genre within cultural criticism she calls the "poetics of testimony":

¹⁷⁹ Cady, 237.

The writers of contemporary literature—African Americans, incest and rape survivors, postcolonial theorists, gays, lesbians, bisexuals—all turn to the term “testimony” to describe their discourse, to tell truth as they see it, as they experience it, and what truth means to their communities.¹⁸⁰

Important for Chopp is not just listening to these alternative perspectives, but also shifting how they are interpreted and evaluated. Modern methods in theology are susceptible to distort and dismiss testimony from the margins. Efforts claiming to utilize reason to interrogate different perspectives may mask a theologian’s own preferences. For example attempts to determine which testimonies most align with Christian claims may simply prioritize perspectives that most align with the theologian’s own experience. Testimonies challenge positivistic notions of objectivity because they don’t necessarily offer empirical evidence, but are instead brought to us through a medium, a person that recounts the events or details. They thereby overtly demonstrate how claims to truth about reality are contextual and particular.

Chopp proposes theology shifts from the language of the courtroom, such as interrogating, judging and weighing evidence, to negotiation “between what is and what can be”¹⁸¹. Such a shift requires listening to different perspectives. For Chopp, theologians are tasked with identifying and ensuring alternative theological claims, like that of Reformed Charismatics, are given the opportunity to be heard on their own terms and style, as equal members of theological discourse all toward influencing new ways of understanding. Chopp’s proposal may be critiqued for idealizing the authenticity of testimony and romanticising efforts to empower marginalized people and their perspectives, but her work exemplifies practical approaches to theological reflection necessary in research on Reformed Charismatics.

¹⁸⁰ Rebecca S. Chopp, “Theology and the Poetics of Testimony,” in *Converging on Culture : Theologians in Dialogue with Cultural Analysis and Criticism*, Reflection and Theory in the Study of Religion (Oxford: Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2001), 56.

¹⁸¹ Chopp, 67.

6 REFORMED CHARISMATIC THEOLOGY

This study frames Reformed congregations as social groups each with a particular theology. Within this congregational theology Reformed Charismatics have a minority theological perspective. They have in a sense a hybrid theology between the different theological perspectives of the Reformed and Pentecostal traditions.

6.1 Faith Communities as Social Groups

Hopewell's prior international missionary experience and ecumenical efforts led him to a scholarly focus on the impact of culture. As a seminary professor working with local churches and training future congregational leaders he began to observe "how astonishingly thick and meaning-laden is the actual life of a single local church."¹⁸²

A group of people cannot regularly gather for what they feel to be religious purposes without developing a complex network of signals and symbols and conventions—in short, a subculture—that gains its own logic and then functions in a way peculiar to that group.¹⁸³

These local faith communities are part of wider society, but as a subgroup cultivate distinct beliefs, practices and products.

Tanner, in her exploration of the benefits of postmodern cultural analysis for Christian theology, argues although functioning like a distinct culture, Christians broadly are not a distinct social group. For Tanner, Christians, and local congregations, function more like a "club" marked by voluntary relational associations. That said, it is a unique club,

unusual in its potential to produce close personal ties—a substitute family in that sense—among people of very different classes and circumstances, and to provide

¹⁸² James F. Hopewell, *Congregation : Stories and Structures* (London: London : SCM, 1988), 3.

¹⁸³ Hopewell, 5.

its members with an abiding reference point for the direction of their lives whether in or out of such Christian company¹⁸⁴

Sustained and supported by congregational norms, a whole way of life with universal claims is lived out in varying degrees by members in their involvement in different spheres in wider society. Churches, as associations or clubs, are capable of functioning akin to a social movement,

that takes people in in order to change their ways (say, by consciousness-raising) but that also intends to shake up the social practices of those outside, and not just by bringing them into the fold¹⁸⁵

Culture shaping is multi-directional in that a local congregational culture will impact wider society, and vice versa, primarily through the social actions of its members.

To the extent a local church functions as a social group, it has a distinct contextual theology and praxis. Per Hopewell, this is primarily a “storied persona,”¹⁸⁶ a unique personality of sorts, with its own emphases and interpretations of shared Christian stories, symbols, rituals and praxis. Identifying congregations by focusing on commonly used descriptors like demographics, finances, church size, denominational associations, even doctrinal statements for Hopewell is missing the point. A congregation is unique, even from another church down the street, based on the shared story the community cultivates and lives out.

This unique, idiomatic congregational theology is constructed from multiple sources from within and outside the congregation. As an example, Hopewell cites four different churches’ view of money. While distinct from one another, all four, based on Hopewell’s analysis, are also different than Jesus’ teaching on the topic.¹⁸⁷ As such,

¹⁸⁴ Tanner, *Theories of Culture : A New Agenda for Theology*, 98.

¹⁸⁵ Tanner, 103.

¹⁸⁶ Hopewell, *Congregation : Stories and Structures*, 1988, 105–6.

¹⁸⁷ Hopewell, 8.

no congregation is a “pure gospel” church, composed solely of inarguably Christian practices; no living church escapes the contributions that a wider culture makes to its nature and continuing history.¹⁸⁸

Per postmodern critique, social groups, while particular, are permeable and in flux from influences outside and negotiations of difference within.

In summary, churches function as a social group and can be studied through cultural analysis. A church’s theology is shaped by its wider cultural context and the particular ways the congregation appropriates common Christian stories, symbols, rituals and praxis. The extent a church’s shared theology influences members is dependent on many factors, such as level of involvement, voluntary agreement, how a individual works out conflict and appropriation in dialogue with other social groups in their life.

6.2 Reformed Charismatics as a Theological Minority

Some members of a congregation, due to various factors, may operate with a counter- or alternative theology within the wider congregation. As Healy has argued in encouraging more true to life, concrete ecclesiology, church life is messy and complex, even confusing, as is an individual’s own faith journey.¹⁸⁹ And per Tanner, “Christian discipleship is an essentially contested notion.”¹⁹⁰ Again, for Tanner, argument over what it means to be a disciple of Jesus is the mark of Christian identity.¹⁹¹

Conflict, in short, is a reality within faith communities and can be framed as the dynamic negotiation of theological norms within a social group.

¹⁸⁸ Hopewell, 15.

¹⁸⁹ Nicholas M Healy, *Church, World, and the Christian Life : Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge, UK, 2000), 3.

¹⁹⁰ Tanner, *Theories of Culture : A New Agenda for Theology*, 159.

¹⁹¹ Tanner, 159.

As described in the literature review above, the last century of the Pentecostal movement in America has involved tension with mainline, historic churches. This was particularly apparent during the Charismatic Renewal of the 1960s and 1970s when pastors, local congregations and denominational officials came to terms what seemed irreconcilable differences. Responses were diverse depending on the denomination, local church and people involved, but included censure and division.

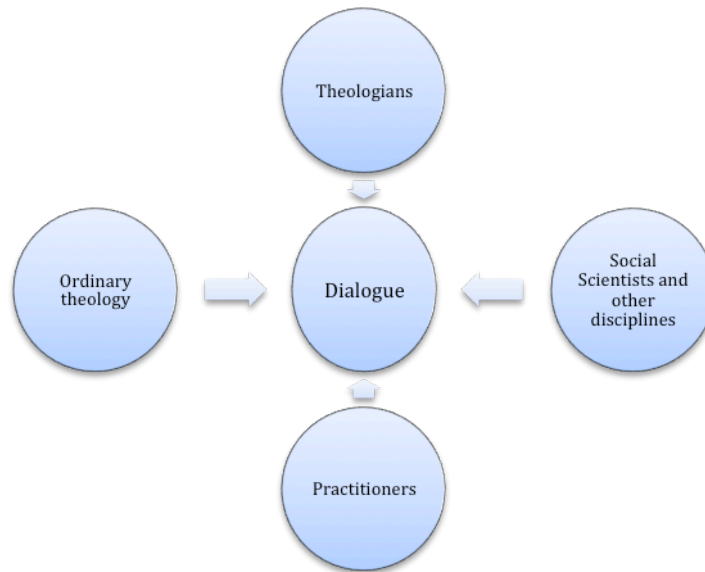
In the midst of this theological conflict, a particular subgroup became visible that still exists today. Simply defined, Reformed Charismatics are those who embrace Charismatic theology and praxis, but are from and may stay within a Reformed church. Generally, Reformed Charismatic perspectives are a minority within the dominate theological norms of a PC(USA) congregation, numerically and in the distribution of power. Accessing their particular, hybrid theology requires attention to all the postmodern influences on theological reflection highlighted above. Reformed Charismatics have a marginalized, particular, ordinary, constructed theology, influenced by their wider dominant congregational theology. Specifics on how their beliefs and praxis are observed and analysed, as perceived through a subjective researcher, are the focus in the next chapter on methodology.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Studying the ordinary theology of Reformed Charismatics involves a mixed methods approach of interviews and participant observation among a specific congregation. This ordinary theology is put in mutual critical dialogue with relevant social scientific research, academic theology and autoethnography toward the goal of detailed description and analysis. Section seven below discusses this dialogical approach adapted from pastoral cycles in practical theology. Section eight addresses issues with interdisciplinary dialogue between theology and social scientific inquiry, and specifically the use of ethnography in theological reflection. Section nine focuses on the key role of researcher reflexivity through exploring shifts in traditional forms of ethnography to autoethnography. Epistemological and ontological questions repeatedly arise and are addressed from a critical realist perspective. The chapter concludes with an overview of specific methods used (section ten) and a brief discussion of validity (section eleven) and ethical concerns (section twelve).

7 PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AND DIALOGUE

Multiple dialogues converge in this project: 1) the dialogue between individual Reformed Charismatics and their Reformed faith tradition and ecclesial context; 2) dialogue between the researcher's own context, presuppositions and the research setting; 3) the dialogue between ordinary and more formal theology, specifically the Reformed tradition's efforts to address Pentecostalism; and 4) interdisciplinary dialogue with the social sciences, particularly other sociological and anthropological research on Reformed Charismatics or similar. These are all incorporated in bringing the following four voices in conversation:



This dialogue involves navigating challenging issues around interdisciplinary studies, epistemology and valid theological reflection. Before addressing these methodological debates, the following section frames the dialogical approach within the discipline of practical theology, highlighting the different voices and their role.

7.1 Pastoral Cycle as Dialogue

Ballard and Pritchard offer a typology of four distinct but related models of practical theology:¹⁹²

- 1) Applied model: One starts with theory derived from either theological reflection on sacred texts or from some other discipline, particularly psychology or sociology, and seeks to apply the theory to a practical situation.
- 2) Correlation model: Marked by mutual dialogue between the theological disciplines and other disciplines, primarily the social sciences, toward assessing and strategizing about a practical situation.

¹⁹² John Pritchard and Paul Ballard, *Practical Theology in Action : Christian Thinking in the Service of Church and Society* (London: SPCK, 2006), 43–68.

- 3) Praxis model: Start with practical, contextual circumstances and move to the theoretical. What is found in studying and engaging with the practical can then be put in dialogue with wider theory, biblical study and church tradition.
- 4) Habitus: Practical action is rooted in habitual behaviour, patterns or subconscious brain function. Focus is on spiritual formation over time and what is required for people to form habits, or practical actions, which align with theoretical perspectives, as well as biblical and church traditions.

Ballard and Pritchard then propose a ‘pastoral cycle’ that integrates the strengths of each of these models and their respective methods to facilitate effective theological reflection. It amounts to a fourfold dialogical process starting with experience:

- 1) Experience: Experience is rooted in the present circumstances of a particular, contextual situation. In this case the theology and praxis of Reformed Charismatics at Central Presbyterian.
- 2) Exploration: The aim is to gain deeper insight into the presenting situation. The particular perspectives of those involved are put in conversation with the views of experts from relevant disciplines.
- 3) Reflection: Focus is on (re)interpreting the situation in light of discoveries during the exploration process. Theological disciplines play a key role, as do the presuppositions and beliefs of those doing the reflection. Ballard and Pritchard emphasize the need for reflection that is personal and corporate, aware of differing views and engaged with the realities of contextual experience. Autoethnography of the researcher, practitioner and academic theological perspectives as well as the theories of social scientists are brought into dialogue with the Reformed Charismatics at Central.

4) Action: Emphasis is on informed action. While the culmination of the process, action is not the end point, but another step in a cyclical process.

Informed action shapes new experiences which are then explored and reflected on leading to further action.¹⁹³ Practical action is not the primary aim of this study, although a possible by-product. Focus is on description over prescription.

Similar ‘pastoral cycles’ have been developed by liberation theologians as well as Don Browning¹⁹⁴ and Laurie Green,¹⁹⁵ to name a few. Common among them is the effort to improve both theological reflection and praxis for those in specific contexts—particularly ordinary theologians. For example, Green’s development of a dialogical pastoral cycle aims to address two challenges: 1) “Find exciting new theological insights already there”¹⁹⁶ in the context and experience explored. Counter the ‘application model,’ Green seeks to avoid packaging outside theology and fitting it into the context. 2) Theology that is transformative. For Green, the quality and content of the theology is demonstrated in the subsequent action, not theory on its own.¹⁹⁷

This study utilizes practical theological methods as a way to adequately address the research question. Understanding Pentecostal influence on the Reformed tradition requires direct interaction with those being influenced. Reformed Charismatics develop their own working theology. As Cartledge observes,

The starting point for the practical theological investigation is the person as the agent of investigation. This may be as an individual or with others in a research group. The person, or persons, involved in the study has a particular spirituality arising from a specific worldview and belongs to a particular ecclesial tradition.

¹⁹³ Pritchard and Ballard, 77–78.

¹⁹⁴ Don S Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology : Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis : Fortress, 1991).

¹⁹⁵ Laurie Green, *Let’s Do Theology : Resources for Contextual Theology*, Completely revised and updated new edition. (London: London : Mowbray, 2009).

¹⁹⁶ Green, ix.

¹⁹⁷ Green, 11.

Indeed there may be a tension between the spirituality and the ecclesial tradition, for example, as seen in how charismatics relate to the Church of England.¹⁹⁸

Perspectives from the Reformed tradition are mixed with Charismatic theology and praxis and appropriated based on the individual and her congregational and wider context. Interviews and autoethnography will call out this tension toward identifying the hybrid theology of Reformed Charismatics and relevant impact on praxis.

In this dialogue, ordinary theology is not viewed as second order or less viable. Ordinary Reformed Charismatic perspectives are allowed to critique and clarify more formal theological perspectives. The Action Research: Church and Society (ARCS) project's Theological Action Research (TAR) approach illustrates this mutual dialogue. The TAR approach assumes: "the practices of faithful Christian people are themselves already the bearers of theology; they express the contemporary living tradition of the Christian faith"¹⁹⁹. Thus, ordinary theological praxis is framed as one among a "theology in four voices". First is the espoused theology of believers, most clearly revealed in a group's articulation of its beliefs. Second is operant theology found in the actual practices of a group. Third, normative theology is in the official church teaching, liturgy, and interpretations of sacred texts and creeds. Fourth is the formal theology of professional theologians in dialogue with other academic disciplines. Formal and normative theologies function to critique espoused and operative as well as provide language and deeper understanding. Operative and espoused will also critique formal and normative voices as "embodied theology" which has its "own authority

¹⁹⁸ Mark J. Cartledge, *Practical Theology: Charismatic and Empirical Perspectives*, Studies in Pentecostal and Charismatic Issues (Carlisle; Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Pr, 2003), 24,

¹⁹⁹ Helen Cameron, *Talking about God in Practice : Theological Action Research and Practical Theology* (London: London : SCM Press, 2010), 51.

within the properly complex dynamic of theological voices”²⁰⁰. This theological dialogue dominates chapter five below.

7.2 The Goals of Practical Theological Dialogue

Scholars utilize practical theological methods for different aims and outcomes. For many it boils down improved praxis. Groome aims to increase alignment between articulated belief and lived action, where knowledge becomes Christ-like action. He also hopes to empower people to improve application of their faith to new situations.²⁰¹ Similarly, Wingeier aims to equip people in improving faith translation. Faith translation is a process of discerning divine activity, then articulate and evaluate one’s discernment based on historical precedent and appropriately respond.²⁰² Similarly, Andrew Root develops a practical theological approach meant to aid in identifying divine action.²⁰³ For Cartledge the goal is better informed practice which edifies the community of faith. Browning seeks to develop more relevant theology and Christian practical wisdom. L. Green utilizes his version of a pastoral cycle to aid in accessing contextual theology while also improving it. Similarly, Elaine Graham seeks to help communities understand their particular theology in the midst of the ambiguity of

²⁰⁰ Cameron, 56.

²⁰¹ Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith : A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry : The Way of Shared Praxis* (Eugene, Or.: Wipf and Stock, 1998), 225.

²⁰² Douglas E. Wingeier, “Christian Education as Faith Translation,” in *Critical Perspectives on Christian Education : A Reader on the Aims, Principles and Philosophy of Christian Education*, ed. Jeff. Astley and Leslie J. Francis (Leominster, Herefordshire: Gracewing, 1994), 238–41.

²⁰³ Root is concerned that practical theologians have neglected people’s concrete experience of divine action and proposes an interpretive grid informed by Reformed theology to determine how God acts (Christopraxis) which aids in identifying divine action in contextual, concrete human experience. Andrew Root, *Christopraxis : A Practical Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis : Fortress Press, 2014).

postmodernity through excavating and evaluating the values that shape practice.²⁰⁴

Cameron and the ARCS team speak of aiding academic theology in better engaging and supporting churches, improving theological reflection and praxis within faith communities and curbing the influence of secularism.

The goal of utilizing practical theological methods in this project, and particularly mutual critical dialogue between the specific ‘voices’ identified above, is for better understanding. Akin to Wigg-Stevenson’s view,

The practice of doing theology is changed by doing it in an ethnographic way. Normative statements are not easily made. Theology becomes more descriptive than prescriptive. In fact, this project in many ways challenges the notion that theology must, by definition, be normative and prescriptive. It seeks to carve out greater space for the descriptive moments of theological reflection, claiming that if stories contribute to the shaping of who we are then the telling of complex theological stories is a good in itself.²⁰⁵

The pragmatic, ordinary theology of Reformed Charismatics, their accounts of their beliefs, practices and experience, in dialogue with other voices are a source of insight into real life ecumenical dialogue and questions around the influence and impact of Pentecostalism. But, Reformed and Pentecostal-Charismatic dialogue is wrought with challenges that have created church divisions, relational conflict and crises of faith. Thus, as mentioned earlier, this research project may be beneficial to Reformed Charismatics experiencing this reality first-hand as well as those they are in relationship, particularly pastoral leaders.

²⁰⁴ Elaine L Graham, *Transforming Practice : Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty* (Eugene, OR: Eugene, OR : Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 208–9.

²⁰⁵ Natalie Wigg-Stevenson, “Faith in My Bones: An Exercise in Ethnographic Theology,” ed. Ellen T. Armour, 2011, 19.

8 INTERDISCIPLINARY DIALOGUE WITH THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

8.1 Theology Utilizing Social Scientific Methods

There is substantial debate about theological dialogue with the social sciences. Milbank sounds an alarm that theology “has passively submitted itself to being governed by the methodologies and truth claims of secular reason.”²⁰⁶ For Milbank, “scientific social theories are themselves theologies or antitheologies in disguise,”²⁰⁷ “colonizing the discipline”²⁰⁸ of theology. Most fundamentally, social theory excludes the existence and activity of the divine.

However, scholars are critical both of Milbank’s assessment of social theory and the direness of his warnings. Marti observes,

As a person extensively trained in social theory, I found the understanding, let alone representation, of “social theory” reflected in the book to be radically impoverished. Not only does the book wholly ignore a wide scope of theoretical developments employed by present-day theologians, it also consciously obscures the distinctly human bias inherent to the writing of such a fiercely partial theological position toward more contemporary thought.²⁰⁹

The issue of human bias surfaces repeatedly in this debate. If all human inquiry is limited and perspectival regardless of philosophical and ontological assumptions, at its most extreme, how can anyone claim privileged access to knowledge and priority in interdisciplinary dialogue? Because of perspectival limitations, all have something to learn from and offer other perspectives.

Brittain, in defending his use of ethnography in theological reflection on the

²⁰⁶ John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory : Beyond Secular Reason*, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Malden, MA, 2006), 3.

²⁰⁷ Milbank, 3.

²⁰⁸ Milbank, 114.

²⁰⁹ Gerardo Marti, “Found Theologies versus Imposed Theologies: Remarks on Theology and Ethnography from a Sociological Perspective,” *Ecclesial Practices* 3, no. 2 (2016): 167.

divisive issue of sexual orientation and ecclesial leadership, argues:

Contra Milbank, the debate between theology and social science need not be framed as two competing master narratives vying for domination with one inevitably succumbing to the control of the other. If one discipline is described as being self-sufficient and unable to learn from another, then, I suggest, the scholar is being unwilling to be open enough to learn something new.²¹⁰

Brittain acknowledges Milbank's concern that social theory not be allowed to hijack, replace or police theological inquiry, but he is not convinced this is an inevitable outcome of such a dialogue.²¹¹ Interdisciplinary dialogue can enhance insights derived from one's own methods and theories.

8.2 Challenge of Interdisciplinary Dialogue: Similar Methods, Different Theories

Any idealistic description of interdisciplinary dialogue becomes more muddled when practically worked out in the trenches of scholarly research and debate. For example, for theologians the conversation is often uni-directional. Theologians seek insights and utilize approaches within the social sciences more than social scientists come to theology for dialogue and critique. As Wigg-Stevenson acknowledges in her dissertation,

I am not an ethnographer. It is unlikely that this project would pass muster with sociologists or ethnographers, and to imagine that it could—when I do not have advanced degree studies in either field—would be an insult to those who do receive such intense, formal intellectual and practical training. My endeavors here are theological; they borrow from the tools, guidelines and tactics of ethnography without actually becoming ethnography proper.²¹²

²¹⁰ Christopher Craig Brittain, "Ethnography as Ecclesial Attentiveness and Critical Reflexivity: Fieldwork and the Dispute over Homosexuality in the Episcopal Church," in *Explorations in Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. Christian Scharen (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2012), 132.

²¹¹ Brittain, 115.

²¹² Wigg-Stevenson, "Faith in My Bones: An Exercise in Ethnographic Theology," 18–19.

So, the theologian is left to pursue this dialogue, often on her own, as a specialist in one discipline and at best a novice in the other.

Also, in an effort to navigate the concerns raised by the likes of Milbank, some practical theologians use social theory and methods only at certain points, seeking to ensure that theological theory takes precedence and remains primary.

Can the social sciences *really* challenge theology at a fundamental level [...] If so, this would indicate that the social sciences can be given, at least in principle, some kind of epistemological priority over theology. This raises the important question: *How can a system of knowledge created by human beings challenge a system of knowledge that claims to be given by God?* If mutuality truly means that both parties have an equal voice in the research process and that the social sciences can actually override theology on central issues, then the danger of idolatry becomes a real possibility.²¹³

Per Swinton and Mowat, qualitative research may offer relevant data, but “tells us nothing about the meaning of life, the nature of God, the crucifixion, resurrection or the purpose of the universe”²¹⁴. For this Mowat and Swinton turn to theological reflection on divine revelation, acknowledging this is an “interpretive enterprise” with perspectival limitations.

Swinton and Mowat are seeking to avoid what they see as the threat of relativism while also trying to legitimize theology in the face of modern secular critique of its relevance. They aim to prevent and correct practical theological inquiry that removes or perhaps disguises faith commitments about the existence and activity of God.²¹⁵ But, giving theology special priority may gloss over the influence of human interpretation, exemplified by so much disagreement and debate about what divine revelation is and means. The authors acknowledge their approach is a commitment of faith, but counter that “all commitments to bodies of knowledge and epistemic systems

²¹³ John Swinton, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 83.

²¹⁴ Swinton, 89.

²¹⁵ Swinton, 88.

are foundationally faith commitments, even within the so-called ‘hard sciences’”²¹⁶.

Fundamentally, human bias, or presuppositions framed as faith commitments, are unavoidable. What is crucial for Swinton and Mowat is acknowledging these presuppositions, in a sense embracing them authentically and attending to their impact on the research process.

However, there is more to Milbank’s concern than is addressed by acknowledging that all inquiry is shaped by pre-theoretical commitments and presuppositions. Per Milbank, theology has

frequently sought to borrow from elsewhere a fundamental account of society or history, and then to see what theological insights will cohere with it. But it has been shown that no such fundamental account, in the sense of something neutral, rational and universal, is really available. It is theology itself that will have to provide its own account of the final causes at work in human history, on the basis of its own particular and historically specific faith.²¹⁷

Put succinctly, Milbank contends that social theory is already theology and theology is itself a social theory. By utilizing social scientific methods, one can naively embrace social scientific theories, which for Milbank threaten and distort theological reflection.

However, for Scharen, using ethnography in ecclesiology addresses Milbank’s concerns. “Ethnography provides the most robust response to the sorts of work [Milbank himself] argues is needed to understand the church and the daily lives of Christians in the world”²¹⁸. Scharen is referencing Milbank’s claim that ecclesiology as social theory is only possible “if ecclesiology is rigorously concerned with the actual genesis of real historical churches, not simply with the imagination of an ecclesial

²¹⁶ Swinton, 89.

²¹⁷ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory : Beyond Secular Reason*, 380.

²¹⁸ Christian Scharen and Aana Marie Vigen, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics* (London: London : Continuum, 2011), 47.

ideal”²¹⁹. Scharen argues theological ethnography offers a Christian social theory addressing questions of Christian meaning-making and action. Contra Milbank,

ethnography can be drawn upon as a fairly “theory-free” practice of sociology able to incorporate the full range of the theological imagination in taking stock of the world’s life²²⁰

In other words, theologians can utilize methods more common in the social sciences without wholesale embrace of the theoretical arguments of social theory. Similar to Swinton and Mowat, theologians can look elsewhere for a foundational account of society and history. Thus, in agreement with Milbank, theology itself will provide perspective on “the final causes at work in human history, on the basis of its own particular and historically specific faith”²²¹. But, per Scharen, will utilize, in part, ethnographic methods to do this—particularly as it relates to engaging with specific, contextual realities of ecclesial life.

Key social scientists used in this study are focused on entirely different research questions. For example, Warner is exploring shifts in American religion and Luhrmann is examining how ‘experiential evangelicals’ can sustain belief in a deity who ‘talks back’ despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Thus, much of their theoretical reflection is tangential to this study’s focus on Pentecostal influence. However, Warner and Luhrmann’s research brings important analysis to the table of interdisciplinary dialogue. Warner’s encounter with Reformed Charismatics in the Presbyterian congregation he studied sheds light on similar cultural dynamics at Central Presbyterian. His theories of the nascent and institutional aid in framing the realities Reformed Charismatics must navigate. Luhrmann provides compelling dialogue around spiritual formation and praxis. Interaction with her theories on

²¹⁹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory : Beyond Secular Reason*, 380.

²²⁰ Scharen and Vigen, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 50.

²²¹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory : Beyond Secular Reason*, 380.

absorption, training and communal influence do not require accepting her theoretical presuppositions about hard and fast boundaries between internal and external sense data – elaborated on further in chapter six. Nor does it require embrace of her psychological anthropological approach. Reformed Charismatics demonstrate notable exceptions and add complexity to Luhrmann’s theories on communal, corporate influence. As will be demonstrated in chapter six, conversation with social scientists does not pose a threat to the theological analysis of this study. Instead the dialogue serves further understanding.

8.3 Where is the Theology? Can Ethnography Access Theology?

Beyond the concerns of the influence of secular reason and the possible theoretical pitfalls of theological dialogue with social sciences, Webster warns against using ethnographic methods in ecclesiology because they are limited in accessing knowledge about God.

there is by the nature of the case a certain obscurity to the historical-practical reality of the church. Its temporal forms are not unconditionally transparent; they do not show the church’s source of life without ambiguity.²²²

Webster argues for the need to attend to the invisible in addition to visible dimensions of God’s activity:

the church’s spiritual visibility means, first, that its being is not exhausted in its phenomenal surface, because the church is constituted by the presence and action of God “who is invisible”²²³

Webster affirms the role of ethnographic methods, but prioritizes “prayerful reason illumined by the Holy Spirit”. This “contemplative science” puts focus on the invisible

²²² John Webster, “‘In the Society of God’: Some Principles of Ecclesiology,” in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. Pete Ward, Studies in Ecclesiology and Ethnography (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Grand Rapids, Mich., 2012), 215.

²²³ Webster, 215.

activity of God, the “secret energy of the Spirit” in the historical, concrete reality of the church that sustains its nature and existence.²²⁴

Webster’s segregation of the visible and invisible demonstrates an idealistic view of the church and theological inquiry. He affirms in his own way the complexity of theological reflection without providing an alternative method that resolves mysteries, tensions and debates regarding divine revelation. He acknowledges the critique that dogmatic ecclesiology may be too idealistic, glossing over the complex diversity of concrete reality, but is concerned about a turn to social science and historical analysis to do ecclesiology. “Put simply: ecclesiology and ecclesial action are creaturely realities, to be set under the metaphysics of grace.”²²⁵ Specifically, it is a matter of epistemological priority and order:

Christian dogmatics does not concede the ontological primacy and self-evidence of the social-historical; and it considers that apprehension of the phenomenal visibility of social-historical realities is not possible in the absence of reference to their ordering to God, that is, in the absence of reference to their creatureliness.²²⁶

With this ordering, Webster establishes a limiting hierarchy of knowledge dependent on a naïve realistic epistemology.²²⁷ No need to belabour the point, because it is already made elsewhere, but there is ambiguity in theological reflection from the “prayerful reason” Webster prioritizes.²²⁸ Webster’s critique also aligns with the

²²⁴ Webster, 215–16.

²²⁵ Webster, 203.

²²⁶ Webster, 204.

²²⁷ Pete Ward, “Blueprint Ecclesiology and the Lived: Normativity as a Perilous Faithfulness,” *Ecclesial Practices* 2, no. 1 (2015): 75.

²²⁸ See Ward’s critique of Webster’s argument as naïve realism. Ward uses A. Wright’s description of critical realism to hold in tension the epistemological relativity of ‘blueprint ecclesiology’ and critique Webster for a naïve realism, or Enlightenment normativity, in which it is possible through theological reflection to access a divinely revealed true nature and essence of the church. Per Ward, such an ecclesiology may exist as a reality inspired by God, but our ability to access this reality is limited and provisional by our context. Ward, 85.

‘application approach’ to practical theology and minimizes human agency in cooperation with the Holy Spirit.

Important instead is to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of any chosen approach. Healy walks this tension well. He warns against the deficiencies of ‘blue print ecclesiology’ while also acknowledging the limitations of ethnography.

While affirming ecclesiology over the last hundred years for its profound insights, Healy is concerned that,

In general ecclesiology in our period has become highly systematic and theoretical, focused more upon discerning the right things to think about the church rather than orientated to the living, rather messy, confused and confusing body that the church actually is. It displays a preference for describing the church’s theoretical and essential identity rather than its concrete and historical identity.²²⁹

Healy critiques the influence of shifting methodological trends, how “dull” ecclesiology has become and most significantly the neglect of the concrete church.

Contra Webster, Healy argues not just for attending to the influence of the Holy Spirit, but also human choice:

it is therefore not enough to discuss our ecclesial activity solely in terms of its dependent relation upon the work of the Holy Spirit. The identity of the concrete church is not simply given; it is constructed and ever reconstructed by the grace-enabled activities of its members as they embody the church’s practices, beliefs and valuations.²³⁰

While Webster doesn’t deny this, Healy puts more emphasis on the influence of human participation alongside the agency of God. Study of human activity is theological because human agency is part of ecclesiology.

That said, Healey warns against the practical theology approaches of Vander ven and Don Browning. For Healy a critical correlational approach distorts Christian

²²⁹ Nicholas M Healy, *Church, World, and the Christian Life : Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge, UK, 2000), 3.

²³⁰ Healy, 5.

theology “by uncritically assimilating normative humanistic beliefs”²³¹ from the social sciences. Again it is debate over degree and emphasis as to the role and influence of the social sciences. Healy, similar to Webster, Swinton and Mowat and others aims to maintain what he refers to as a “theological horizon”. Churches and their respective contexts may be analysed by all available tools, including methods from other disciplines, but:

Practical-prophetic ecclesiology must deny – if it is to be truly prophetic – any proposal to change the concrete church made merely in order that it may better fit the norms of non-Christian worldview or social context. Nor can it allow social science or any other non-theological discipline to have the final word on our understanding of the ecclesiological context.²³²

Healy, affirming Milbank’s concerns about social scientific theory, identifies a clash at a level of normative worldview. The social sciences are seen as conversation partners, but with caution. There is a “non-Christian worldview,” for Healy, which is more pervasive in non-theological disciplines. So, where there is debate or disagreement, theology must have the final say in ecclesiology:

We must indeed insist that the only adequate form of reflection upon the concrete church is that of theology. And it needs to find ways to make theological use of those forms of discourse that critically examine the complexities and confusions of human activity, such as sociology, cultural analysis and history.²³³

What becomes crucial for Healy, and central to his critique of theology, is affirming a focus on praxis over essence. Healy wants theological reflection on the “the church as it is” toward helping the church carry out its task of witness and discipleship. This puts

²³¹ Healy, 50.

²³² Healy, 50.

²³³ Healy, 5.

focus on the empirical church, not an idealized church nor speculative theological reflection.²³⁴

Where Healy takes his critique of methods further is in also acknowledging the limitations of ethnography. Again contra Webster, these limitations are not necessarily because of the challenges presented by the “concealed, secret character the church”²³⁵ but due to the concrete church’s overwhelming diversity:

1) One church is different than a church around the corner. One denomination’s traditions and emphases take on different expressions in each of its churches even in the same geographic region. Within a single local church, different individuals will have different views, different worship styles, differing levels of commitment and adherence to the dominant culture of the wider community of faith.²³⁶

Coherence and consistency among the members of any given congregation are not, therefore, to be expected. Neither should we expect self-consistency on the part of each member since most of us disagree with ourselves, holding beliefs or engaging in practices that are in tension or conflict with others we also believe and practice.²³⁷

Participant observation, interviews and autoethnography reveal this diversity among Reformed Charismatics at Central Presbyterian. While this brings important complexity in dialogue with academic theology, it can leave a researcher grasping for order that doesn’t simultaneously exclude and obscure as it seeks to reveal relevant insights.

²³⁴ Harold Hegstad, “Ecclesiology and Empirical Research on the Church,” in *Explorations in Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. Christian Scharen (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2012), 38.

²³⁵ Webster, ““In the Society of God’: Some Principles of Ecclesiology,” 222.

²³⁶ Nicholas M. Healy, “Ecclesiology, Ethnography, and God: An Interplay of Reality Descriptions,” in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. Pete Ward, *Studies in Ecclesiology and Ethnography* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Grand Rapids, Mich., 2012), 185.

²³⁷ Healy, 187–88.

2) Whether the aim is normative, generalizable conclusions or even ‘thick description’ of the particular, there is both conscious and unconscious selectivity influencing every stage of the research process:

Although the word “ethnography” suggests a written account of a group having readily discernible distinguishing characteristics, some ethnographers have noted how difficult, even personally disturbing, it can be to describe a congregation’s character or identity. One can reasonably attempt to describe a particular congregation’s style, its configuration of central practices, and its set of typically held beliefs and attitudes. But to go further to try to define its distinctive identity raises questions about the ethnographer’s role and perspective, about the role of dominant members of the congregation and why they are dominant, and about how to address and, as it were, place that which is present but is not typical of the congregation more generally.²³⁸

This becomes all the more significant when studying Reformed Charismatics—a minority, and internally diverse, subculture concealed within the dominant forms of cultural expression of a faith community.

3) What is a researcher really seeing when watching the local church? When looking at beliefs and practices for theological insights, what about the influence of the wider social context on these beliefs and practices?

It may have some influence on that larger society, but the congregation itself is also as it were a Christian expression of the town or region in which it is located, rather than something separate built on another foundation. [...] Differences between congregations and between the members of any one congregation—together with much of what they have in common—reflect attitudes and experiences that come from living with non-ecclesial people and their products, within non-Christian groups and societies. These shape their understanding of doctrine, their reading of Scripture, and their practices.²³⁹

So, theological inquiry is located within the church,²⁴⁰ but the church is not necessarily the starting point or only influence. Better said, the church is complex, diverse and reflects the dynamic shaping of many influences, all

²³⁸ Healy, 186–87.

²³⁹ Healy, 187.

²⁴⁰ Healy, 190.

relevant to theology but not all divine agency. Central Presbyterian is no exception, as elaborated on more in the next chapter.

Clearly Healy doesn't abandon the use or minimize the value of ethnography. He is willing to acknowledge the complexity of congregations, human belief and practice. Ethnography that does not minimize this complexity will include some degree of distortion.²⁴¹ The researcher must bring an interpretive grid to the data in order to find commonality and will, whether or not self consciously aware, exclude data that contradicts the system and theories proposed. While effort is made to avoid distortion in this study, the significant limitations inherent in studying a minority subculture in the midst of a large, internally diverse congregation must be acknowledged.

8.4 Social Scientific Critique of Theological Use of Ethnography

Concerns about the use of ethnography in theology are not limited to theologians. Social scientists rarely seek theological insights. If anything they are avoided, or affirmed but as a separate speculative exercise. When theologians seek to utilize the methods core to disciplines such as anthropology, it solicits scepticism.

Critical social scientists raise several concerns:

1) Theologians are not qualified to appropriately utilize the methods of social scientists. A theologian utilizing ethnography in theological inquiry without adequate knowledge of the wider academic conversation in the wider field of anthropology is naïve, possibly dangerous and clouds any validity to the research data. This may be mitigated by forming a team of researchers specialized in different disciplines. However, as noted, social scientists are less likely to engage in the effort of cross-disciplinary research teams with theology.

²⁴¹ Healy, 187.

2) Theologians and social scientists are using the same methodological terms, but differently. Even the term “ethnography”, E. Phillips suggests, is debated:

Anthropologists usually mean by the term something much more specific than do most theologians. An ethnography is an extraordinarily comprehensive and holistic study of a culture that usually requires several months, if not years, spent inside that culture. When theologians use the term to describe anything from a brief historical vignette to a theological case study, I fear they may be confusing matters more than clarifying.²⁴²

Phillips critique is relevant to this study as the period of participant observation was limited to site visits over an eight month research period. I did not return to the level of immersed engagement with the congregation I once had as a pastor. However, the eight years spent living and working in the community are drawn on to complement the data gathered through participant observation. As described in more detail below, I transitioned out of full immersion in the congregation over six years ago. However, I have stayed engaged with the church in various ways. One example is spending two years immersed in an independent Pentecostal church, utilizing ethnographic methods to explore Reformed-Pentecostal dialogue and sharing my reflections with members at Central Presbyterian. My return to Central for site visits then allowed me to both ‘check back in’ on the cultural dynamics I experienced when a pastor and delve deeper into possible new dynamics at play. Notably, many of the cultural tensions I experienced first hand as a pastor were still present in the congregation.

3) Ethnography can’t be used to reflect theologically. Spickard argues that while ethnography does explore beliefs, it is toward understanding a social

²⁴² Elizabeth Phillips, “Charting the ‘Ethnographic Turn’: Theologians and the Study of Christian Congregations,” in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. Pete Ward, Studies in Ecclesiology and Ethnography (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Grand Rapids, Mich., 2012), 95–106.

group's culture, not divine activity. The big difference between ethnography and theology for Spickard is the "regulative ideal"²⁴³. Ethnography is after clearer and clearer truth about people. Theologians look for God's work in the world and use ethnography to get this insight. For Spickard, true ethnography won't assume studying people will offer information about divine identity or activity. To do so compromises the validity of the research exercise with bias from the outset. Spickard sees value in theological use of ethnography, but only through separating the disciplines. "Doing serious ethnography means that theological reflection happens only after the ethnographic data has rolled in."²⁴⁴ To Spickard's central concern, this research project does not use ethnography to understand divine identity and activity. Instead the focus is on deeper insights about Pentecostal influence through the lens of cultural analysis.

4) Theologians may naively overlook the challenges and limitations of ethnography. Like Spickard, Marti particularly warns of research bias:

Insights generated by participant observation are constantly at risk of imposition of personal presumptions and asserted "truths," especially when researchers enter the field with strongly held convictions and compelling worldviews. [...] decades of controversies and refinements among social scientists should caution theologians.²⁴⁵

Marti frames this through distinguishing between "found theologies" and "imposed theologies". Marti's primary concern is reflexivity, discussed more in section nine below.

Effort is made in this study to learn from the insights afforded by use of ethnographic methods—seeing what may be missed by using systematic, biblical

²⁴³ James Spickard, "The Porcupine Tango: What Ethnography Can and Cannot Do for Theologians," *Ecclesial Practices* 3, no. 2 (2016): 176.

²⁴⁴ Spickard, 176.

²⁴⁵ Marti, "Found Theologies versus Imposed Theologies: Remarks on Theology and Ethnography from a Sociological Perspective," 159.

and practical theological methods alone. However, this study stops short of an anthropology of religion. Ethnographic methods are used with caution, acknowledging I am a theologian utilizing the tools of another discipline as a novice. The aim is improved theological analysis not cultural analysis, while seeking to avoid using the concept of culture too broadly and naively running roughshod over debates within the discipline of anthropology I am not qualified to fully engage. Reformed Charismatics cultivate a minority theological perspective and in ways exhibit tendencies toward counter- or minority culture attributes. However, the argument in this study is not grounded in framing Reformed Charismatics themselves as a social group with a particularly 'culture' nor suggesting the members and attendees of the church at the centre of this study are a distinct 'culture'. Ethnography is used intending, as Geertz describes in *Interpretation of Culture*, "to clarify what goes on in such places, to reduce the puzzlement—what manner of men are these?"²⁴⁶ -- referring in this study specifically to what manner of theology and praxis Reformed Charismatics demonstrate. Like in anthropological writing, this study is an interpretation facing many of the same limitations that Geertz sees in cultural analysis,

Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the more deeply it goes the less complete it is. It is a strange science whose most telling assertions are its most tenuously based, in which to get somewhere with the matter at hand is to intensify the suspicion, both your own and that of others, that you are not quite getting it right.²⁴⁷

In the face of these limitations, this study uses ethnographic tools to access and interpret the 'ordinary' or everyday lived theology of Reformed Charismatics and

²⁴⁶ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures : Selected Essays*, ACLS Humanities E-Book (New York: New York : Basic Books, 1973), 16.

²⁴⁷ Geertz, 29.

put this in dialogue with formal and practical theological voices, aiming for a more dynamic, valid description of Reformed Charismatic theology.

Alongside using ethnography as a one of many methodological strategies, this study is distinct from anthropological study of religion in both conversation partners, i.e. primary theological voices, and overarching questions and aims. Take for example Bialecki's anthropological study of Vineyard churches in the *A Diagram of Fire*. Bialecki takes up the question of what is distinctive about the Vineyard, offering an immersive ethnography of Vineyard communities in Southern California. Bialecki found in the Vineyard movement a "mode" of Christianity in many ways distinct from other forms of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity but recognizably similar, creating the opportunity to explore wider anthropological questions about religion. In Bialecki's words, "Is the study of this mode of religiosity valuable for reasons that exceed a topical interest in this particular object? Does it tell us something about, say, religious change and permutation itself?"²⁴⁸ At the risk of splitting hairs, while rooted in study of religion and utilizing ethnographic methods, the aims of this research on Reformed Charismatics is different – stopping short of anthropological questions of defining, analysing and comparing human religiosity and keeping the focus on describing, through theological analysis, a form of Pentecostalism found among Reformed Charismatics. In this theological study, anthropologists like Bialecki, Luhrmann and Warner become important conversation partners in dialogue with theologians, Christian practitioners and Reformed Charismatics themselves

²⁴⁸ Jon Bialecki, *A Diagram of Fire: Miracles and Variations in an American Charismatic Movement*, The Anthropology of Christianity (University of California Press, 2017), 200.

illuminating further the interpretation of Reformed Charismatic theology and praxis found in this study.

8.5 Specific Advantages of Using Ethnography in Ecclesiology

Advocates for utilizing ethnography in theological reflection cite multiple benefits. Each is relevant in the use of ethnography in this study. Brittain turns to ethnography in an ecclesial debate not resolved by theology and biblical studies. He uses qualitative research methods and attention to social contexts to break new ground in the impasse over ecclesial issues related to homosexuality in Anglicanism.²⁴⁹ Brittain argues ethnography aids ecclesiology in three ways: 1) It engages theological debate within the particular social context it is occurring. This allows appropriate attention on the many factors shaping perspectives that are ‘non-theological’.²⁵⁰ 2) Ethnography aids in moving beyond normative claims that may be too general to address the specific concerns of an unresolved debate. It can aid in bringing to the surface the presuppositions underpinning different perspectives, allowing dialogue at a deeper level. 3) Ethnography also helps in identifying the real issues at stake for those most concerned about the debate.²⁵¹ And it provides access to the complexity and nuance of the debated issues. Brittain offers the example of an interview in which a woman clearly and simply stated the issue of homosexuality was a matter of choosing Christ or false belief. But, when asked about the consequence of people leaving the church because of disagreement, she didn’t think it was worth it and should have been prevented.²⁵² Ethnography serves the same purpose in this study. Theological and

²⁴⁹ Brittain, “Ethnography as Ecclesial Attentiveness and Critical Reflexivity: Fieldwork and the Dispute over Homosexuality in the Episcopal Church,” 134.

²⁵⁰ Brittain, 132.

²⁵¹ Brittain, 135.

²⁵² Brittain, 135.

biblical interpretation debates on their own are unable to adequately address the lived experience and theological tensions facing Reformed Charismatics.

Complexifying, to use Swinton and Mowat's terminology, is often cited by theologians as a benefit. Becker and Eiseland affirm the ways ethnography exposes the inadequacies and reductionism of some academic categories. For example, the categories of theologically 'liberal' and 'conservative' may serve to delineate opposing views, but may not adequately describe a particular person or community's perspective.²⁵³ As Scharen argues, ethnography keeps theology from slipping into a false sacred-secular dichotomy and demonstrates how all of life and multiple influences shape churches and Christian understanding.²⁵⁴ Ethnography in this study adds important complexity to Reformed theological debate with Pentecostal belief and praxis. It reveals the important nuanced particularly of Reformed Charismatics at Central. Not all their experience, and interpretation of their experience, is aligned as is explored further below.

Becker and Eiseland see an opportunity through ethnographic methods to analyse periods of rapid social and institutional change as well as analysis of new phenomena. Both present new insights to subjects that may appear thoroughly researched and challenge general, normative theories, such as the secularization theories under scrutiny and revision in sociology of religion.²⁵⁵

Too often, our analysis of changes in American religion are organized as a straight-forward narrative of decline, a lament for lost community and public influence that captures more about the experiences of white, middle-class

²⁵³ Penny Edgell Becker and Nancy L. Eiesland, "Introduction: Developing Interpretations: Ethnography and the Restructuring of Knowledge in a Changing Field," in *Contemporary American Religion: An Ethnographic Reader* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: Walnut Creek, Calif., 1997), 19.

²⁵⁴ Scharen and Vigen, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 67.

²⁵⁵ Becker and Eiesland, "Introduction: Developing Interpretations: Ethnography and the Restructuring of Knowledge in a Changing Field," 19.

members of “mainline” religions than it does about American religion as a whole²⁵⁶

This is a hallmark of Pentecostal Studies that consistently reveal dynamic and vibrant expression of personal and corporate faith in the midst of commonly labelled Western secular societies. As studies of both evangelicalism and this project on Reformed Charismatics demonstrate, even among white, middle class and upper class communities, there are dramatic exceptions to the narrative of privatization, differentiation and decline.

This ‘complexifying’ of academic theory can serve to keep theological reflection more connected to the church. Ward acknowledges the elephant in the room in many seminaries and theological training institutions: there is often a disconnect between theological reflection and local congregations. While possibly affirming the role of academic theology, many congregations and parishioners find formal theology inaccessible and irrelevant to their concerns. Ward argues for plausibility in ecclesiology and critiques a lack of attentiveness to social realities:

When it comes to history or philosophy, we proceed with considerable caution. We take great care to make sure that we abide by accepted academic convention and we want to demonstrate that we are proceeding with academic rigor. Then when we talk about the contemporary church, completely different rules seem to apply. It becomes acceptable to make assertions where there is no evidence. We assume a common perception of contemporary church life between author and reader. We base whole arguments on anecdote and the selective treatment of experience. We are prone to a sleight of hand that makes social theory appear to be a description of social reality—which of course it is not. The turn to ethnography challenges these conventions by the simple observation that assertions about the lived reality of the church require a kind of discipline and rigor similar to those that pertain in other areas of theological writing.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁶ Becker and Eiesland, 16.

²⁵⁷ Alister E. McGrath, “The Cultivation of Theological Vision: Theological Attentiveness and the Practice of Ministry,” in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. Pete Ward, Studies in Ecclesiology and Ethnography (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Grand Rapids, Mich., 2012), 4.

Ethnography also puts the researcher directly in contact relationally with particular congregations through fieldwork. This participation in the life of church serves to shape the theologian and his analysis, forcing engagement with particular circumstances.

Put simply, ethnography allows theologians to see what they may otherwise miss. Elizabeth Phillips offers an example in her ethnographic study of Christian Zionism as an ethicist.²⁵⁸ She was able to observe significant distinctions with ethnography she would not have in textual analysis alone. The theological positions of the congregation she studied would have been apparent as well as their political engagement and efforts to impact circumstances in the Middle East, but she would not have understood how their eschatology actually operated. Initially Phillips believed the congregation's core motivation was to speed up the second coming of Jesus. Instead her ethnographic research revealed their eschatology was more focused on ethics – living in the world now, in practical ways, toward what they believed to be God's will.²⁵⁹ She was both surprised and personally impacted by their ethical integrity. Ethnography provided a more nuanced picture and confronted Phillips with a theology she disputed held by a community she respected.

Ethnography not only provides the benefits of grounding theological reflection and improving its accuracy and impact, it also allows access to marginalized social groups and perspectives. This can be socio-economically disenfranchised majority groups as well as minority subgroups like Reformed Charismatics. Or as Wunthrow argues, it can be spirituality not expressed within congregational settings.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁸ Phillips, "Charting the 'Ethnographic Turn': Theologians and the Study of Christian Congregations."

²⁵⁹ Phillips, 104.

²⁶⁰ "The danger in drawing too many conclusions about American religion from ethnographic observations in congregations is partly that spirituality occurs in many

Ethnography can bring to the surface, and to the table of theological dialogue, voices which add important depth and nuance to research data and subsequent analysis.

Likewise, ethnographic focus on particularity offers opportunities for transformative learning. Take receptive ecumenism as an example. Ethnography aids different denominations in learning from one another in pragmatic ways that can lead to positive change.²⁶¹ It can also increase understanding within a congregational community. The discord between Reformed Charismatics and their wider Reformed faith community may benefit from critical self-awareness, enhancing insight into oneself, one's own community as well as the other.²⁶² Ethnography can bring to light the influence of past experience, culturally conditioned presuppositions and the wider social context all impacting perceptions and interpretations.

9 ETHNOGRAPHY AND ITS DISCONTENTS: ADDRESSING REFLEXIVITY

For decades traditional modes of ethnography have been scrutinized and found suspect by postmodern critique. The stereotype of the traditional ethnographer as the Western, Christian, heterosexual male, traveling to a foreign land and observing from an objective distance the customs of a foreign people is viewed as distorted and oppressive. Issues of epistemology and ontology have already been touched on above particularly related to the use of ethnography in ecclesiology and theological dialogue

places besides congregations.” Wunthrow offers examples ranging from family life to athletic stadiums or recording studios. Robert Wunthrow, “The Cultural Turn: Stories, Logics, and the Quest for Identity in American Religion,” in *Contemporary American Religion: An Ethnographic Reader*, ed. Penny Edgell Becker and Nancy L. Eiesland (Walnut Creek, Calif.: Walnut Creek, Calif., 1997), 258.

²⁶¹ See Paul D. Murray and Matthew Guest, “On Discerning the Living Truth of the Church: Theological and Sociological Reflections on Receptive Ecumenism and the Local Church,” in *Explorations in Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. Christian Scharen (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2012), 138–64.

²⁶² James Nieman and Roger Haight, “On the Dynamic Relation between Ecclesiology and Congregational Studies,” in *Explorations in Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. Christian Scharen (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2012), 32.

with the social sciences more generally. This project takes a critical realist epistemological approach, walking the tension of ontological realism and epistemological relativism. The following section aims to deeply engage with reflexivity as autoethnography plays such a key role in this study.

Put simply, traditional forms of academic inquiry posited themselves as having an objective perspective which allowed accurate observation and analysis and warranted authoritative conclusions. Their ‘god’s eye view’ involved participant observation, but without acknowledging subjectivity and the impact of the ethnographer’s presence on the research process. They operated with a naïve realism as to access and analysis of their research subjects, ontologically suspicious notions of culture (as bounded, other, primitive/low, and more as discussed above in comparing shifting notions of culture) while either unaware, or not acknowledging positions of power.²⁶³

Autoethnography emerged around fifty years ago in anthropology, boldly placing the researcher at the centre of the research process. Traditional notions of subjectivity and objectivity, the self and the other were radically reworked, if not completely abandoned by postmodern epistemological redefinitions of enculturated perspectives and private versus public knowledge. Rather than the researcher disappearing into the role of the ‘fly on the wall’ outside observer, autoethnography flipped the script placing the researcher at a minimum as a dynamic part of the research process and even the central focus of analysis within a cultural context.²⁶⁴ At the epistemological extreme all that can be known is the researcher’s own perceptions of

²⁶³ David Butz and Kathryn Besio, “Autoethnography,” *Geography Compass* 3, no. 5 (2009): 1662.

²⁶⁴ Sherick Hughes, Julie L. Pennington, and Sara Makris, “Translating Autoethnography across the AERA Standards: Toward Understanding Autoethnographic Scholarship as Empirical Research,” *Educational Researcher* 41, no. 6 (2012): 210.

herself and her own experience of others. Knowledge is particular, constructed and limited. The researcher's cultural background and unique experiences can be leveraged to provide key insights that may otherwise go unnoticed or unacknowledged in traditional forms of ethnography.

Autoethnographers, then, seek to embrace postmodern epistemology and ontological critique without entirely abandoning ethnography as a method of inquiry. In the face of the limits of empiricism, autoethnographers see value in story, even personal narrative. Some turn analytical focus on emotions and the body in acquiring insights. They explore ways to expand study into what was formerly bracketed out as too personal, unpredictable and relative.

Social life is messy, uncertain, and emotional. If our desire is to research social life, then we must embrace a research method that, to the best of its/our ability, acknowledges and accommodates mess and chaos, uncertainty and emotion.²⁶⁵

As mentioned this involves openly accepting subjectivity. Rather than seeking to minimize, segment and control personal bias, this study leverages all aspects of the researcher's presuppositions, personal background and relationships with the subjects of inquiry to gain better access to knowledge.²⁶⁶

Autoethnography also arose out of a heightened concern about the ethics and politics of ethnographic practices. The traditional approach of going to a foreign culture, observing and then returning home to write up a representation of the group without reciprocity nor participant feedback proved ethically dubious and incomplete. In this research project, interviewees are asked to share openly about personal experiences. This requires vulnerability and some measure of risk. In response, careful attention is given to the power differentials between researcher and researched and the

²⁶⁵ Tony E. Adams, *Autoethnography*, Series in Understanding Statistics (New York, New York : Oxford University Press, 2015), 9.

²⁶⁶ Jill McCorkel and Kristen Myers, "What Difference Does Difference Make? Position and Privilege in the Field," *Qualitative Sociology* 26, no. 2 (2003): 200.

use of another's personal life and stories. Research subjects are invited into a dialogical process that highly values vulnerability on the part of the researcher.

Representation, according to Todres, becomes a three-fold process

as mediators of understanding, qualitative researchers care for their informants' voices, care for the complexity and contextuality of the phenomena being expressed, and care for the research audience²⁶⁷

It is common to solicit feedback from those researched on the final draft of the research findings to allow edits and approval before dissemination.

Attention is also given to the style of academic writing used in presenting research findings. Autoethnographers' high value of story involves presenting their data in ways that capture emotion, tension and nuance. Research is presented in narrative form, usually autobiographical in genre. This makes research accessible to multiple audiences, particularly those not fluent in the insider language and concepts of academic disciplines.²⁶⁸ Primarily in the next chapter, voice shifts from a more removed academic tone to first person narrative – the 'autoethnographic I'. Interviewee accounts are also intentionally described in ordinary conversational language reflecting each interviewee's voice and experience.

Autoethnographers also often design their research to intentionally give voice to outsider, minority or marginalized perspectives.²⁶⁹ There is value in the insights of those who may see general normative claims from a different and new way—as in the case of Reformed Charismatics. Muncey's own experience of teen pregnancy fuelled her desire to utilize autoethnography. Many of the assumptions and subsequent conclusions in research on teen pregnancy were not addressing her own story of

²⁶⁷ Les Todres, "Writing Phenomenological-Psychological Descriptions: An Illustration Attempting to Balance Texture and Structure," *Auto/Biography*, no. 2 (2000): 41–48.

²⁶⁸ Adams, *Autoethnography*, 36.

²⁶⁹ Giving voice to outsider or marginalized perspectives is a major emphasis in: Tessa Muncey, *Creating Autoethnographies* (London: London : SAGE, 2010).

pregnancy through abuse. Autoethnography allowed her to address a gap between individual life experience and the dominant public narrative.²⁷⁰ As Muncey argues:

Those eliminated may be people whose complexity would contribute so many intervening variables that they would distract the purpose of the study and are therefore gently cast aside. It is the complexity of individuals that autoethnography seeks to address; the muddled, idiosyncratic, florid eccentricities that make us unique as opposed to part of a population.”²⁷¹

Many studies addressed teen pregnancy as a societal ill needing intervention.

Researchers framed teen pregnancy as deviant, sexual ignorance, moral decline and as a health risk. Muncey did not see anyone make the link to abuse found in 75% of teen pregnancies.²⁷² For Muncey, this is not just analytical distortion or reductionism, but unjust. The outlier sheds light on the norm, but can also be a representative voice of a silent majority.

Similarly, researchers utilize autoethnography to explore topics that are difficult and even impossible to access by interviews or participant observation. An example is the often overlooked mundane beliefs and praxis of ordinary life. Another example is Uotinen’s exploration of her own personal experience of being in an intensive care unit, heavily sedated and often unconscious. Because she didn’t have many conscious memories of the experience, she explored data accessible through her body’s experience, what she labels “unbeknown knowledge”.²⁷³ This is in part the strategy of incorporating my own personal experience as a pastor at Central Presbyterian. I had a front row seat and personally experienced the subtle but significant cultural tensions of being a minority culture. Navigating social norms as a nascent subculture can involve significant subconscious interpretation and reactions that many are not even aware, let

²⁷⁰ Muncey, 3.

²⁷¹ Muncey, xi.

²⁷² Muncey, 6.

²⁷³ Johanna Uotinen, “Senses, Bodily Knowledge, and Autoethnography: Unbeknown Knowledge From an ICU Experience,” *Qualitative Health Research* 21, no. 10 (2011): 1307–15.

alone capable of articulating during an interview. Autoethnography is used in this study in an effort to capture some of this internal, hidden dialogue.

Focus on the outsider, minority (or silent majority) and the challenge of accessing certain subjects makes autoethnography particularly effective at engaging unexamined assumptions.

The unexamined assumptions that govern everyday life, behavior and decision making are as strong as any overt beliefs. The shape and size of these unexamined assumptions can be considered the staple diet of the autoethnographer. If we consider that the dominant voice of the research world is not representing our experience, then we have to find ways of redressing the balance²⁷⁴

This is in part why many autoethnographers are themselves members of minority or marginalized social groups.²⁷⁵ Particular attention is given to social identities and identity politics. For example, how inequitable power relations contribute to certain voices and perspectives gaining more credibility and influence in mainstream discourse.²⁷⁶ This involves acknowledging the researcher's presence, context and perspective.

Critiques of autoethnography are predominantly focused on the methodological moves autoethnographers make to preserve the study of culture in the face of postmodern critique. The use of personal experience as a source of knowledge is critiqued as self-indulgent, narcissistic, introspective and individualized. There is concern that "focus on a single, subjective subject lacks genuinely thick description and

²⁷⁴ Muncey, *Creating Autoethnographies*, xi.

²⁷⁵ "Men most likely to try and embrace writing autoethnography frequently come from minority positions." Carolyn Ellis, *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography*, Ethnographic Alternatives Book Series (Walnut Creek, CA: Walnut Creek, CA : AltaMira Press, 2004), 340.

²⁷⁶ Adams, *Autoethnography*, 14.

threatens to substitute a psychotherapeutic for a sociological view of life.”²⁷⁷ Critics are apprehensive of what is seen as a lack of methodological and systematic rigor. When personal experience is the primary, or only way, to explore a research project it undermines traditional norms for credibility, dependability and trustworthiness. Some are concerned all we are left with is autobiographical information about an individual researcher that is difficult to put in critical dialogue with other empirical studies.

In response autoethnographers call for a change not only in epistemology and ontology, but criterion for validating research. Autoethnographers are not aiming at generalizable, normative conclusions. Focus is on the particular that often stands in contrast and critiques general theories and categories. Effort is made to elaborate on the exceptions to the norm. Thus, repeatability and even triangulation become more difficult. Alternatively, many autoethnographers verify their findings through some version of resonance. Conclusions are valid when others are able to see things they usually wouldn’t have seen with new insight they connect with. Autoethnography, according to Ellis,

argues for story as analysis, for evocation in addition to representation as a goal for social science research, for generalization through the resonance of readers, and for opening up rather than closing down conversation²⁷⁸

Also valued is authenticity of representation, which is marked by vulnerability on the part of the researcher, depth of nuanced description of the researched and an ethics of transparency and cooperation in which research subjects participate.

Autoethnography comes in multiple forms and aims. A rough continuum of sorts can be sketched to allow differentiation. On one extreme is qualitative research that is positivistic. The researcher is separate, seeking generalizable conclusions

²⁷⁷ Sarah Wall, “An Autoethnography on Learning About Autoethnography,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 5, no. 2 (2006): 155.

²⁷⁸ Ellis, *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography*, 22.

through formal methods to predict subsequent behaviours. A wide middle ground includes a range of approaches. Researchers don't adhere rigidly to the rules of empiricism, but often view reality as objective or at least externally accessible to their perspectival observations. Autoethnographic methods are employed to undergird reflexivity and overtly acknowledge the presence and influence, and possible benefits, of the researcher's own experiences and presuppositions. However, there will be a mixture of methods and effort toward triangulation that places the researcher's perspective alongside others through interviews, participant observation and surveys. On the autoethnographic extreme are methods akin to what Ellis describes as an "Impressionist/Interpretive" approach. Stories are told that "show bodily, cognitive, emotional and spiritual experience".²⁷⁹ The researcher wants readers to "keep in their minds and feel in their bodies the complexities of concrete moments of lived experience"²⁸⁰. The style of writing is meant to put the reader in the shoes of someone in the culture. The aim is to cultivate an emotional experience in readers by writing narrative that is of high literary and artistic quality. Often the research is presented in a first person voice and reads as autobiography.

Autoethnography in this project is in the wide middle ground. Employing a critical realist epistemology, interviews of Reformed Charismatics and participant observation within their faith community are key elements in the design of the study. Yet, while these qualitative methods will allow access to their beliefs and praxis, my own bias will be influencing my perceptions and interpretations throughout data collection and analysis. Thus, effort will be made to acknowledge the limitations of my insights, appropriately nuance the complexity and ambiguity of the stories and

²⁷⁹ Ellis, *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography*, 30.

²⁸⁰ Ellis, 30.

experiences of research subjects and provide opportunities for them to influence analysis and representation.

One of the main reasons autoethnographic methods are used is to leverage my own experiences as a Reformed Charismatic, and even further, my prior involvement at Central Presbyterian. I was on staff at the church as an ordained minister for nearly eight years as the Associate Pastor of Youth and Family Ministries. This role gave me direct responsibility over teenagers and their families in the congregation. My role expanded to also include preaching and worship leadership, oversight of various prayer initiatives and other pastoral roles highlighted in chapters five and six below. These years with the congregation were part of a formative time in my own spirituality. I wrestled with personal debates and uncertainties about Charismatic theology and praxis as well as faced the limitations of Reformed theology and the realities of church leadership in a large congregation in an often demanding role as a youth pastor. I aim to articulate these challenges, and my own insecurities along the way, in an effort to describe an ‘insider’ perspective of Reformed Charismatic experience. At times referred to as ‘Closet Charismatics,’ Reformed Charismatics are known for ‘blending in’ to the wider community. Over years being present in the congregation I formed relationships with them. I earned their trust making it easier for informants to share personal beliefs and experiences they may not feel comfortable telling pastors and fellow congregants.

But this project is not autoethnography completely in method, form or style. Data and analysis is not presented as narrative throughout, but like many ethnographies the writing will include story. The presentation is not first person throughout although my own perspective, experiences and reflections on the research process will be expressed at times in the ‘autoethnographic I’. Focus is on a minority group within the

Reformed tradition, of which I am a part, an attribute common to autoethnography, but analysis is not just focused on my personal experience. It will be part of the study and constantly influencing my interpretations, but put alongside the experiences of others.

Autoethnographic excerpts in the following chapter are from a journal recollecting events and personal experience at the church. Stories highlighted are meant to serve as representative examples of Reformed Charismatic experience and provide context within the congregational culture of Central Presbyterian. Effort is made to critique my own perceptions and interpretations, ensuring the autoethnography is not presented as a normative source of data. My voice is one witness among many with inherent limitations, biases and distortions due to the constraints of memory and perceptions. But, appropriately triangulated with the perspectives of interviewees and other conversation partners, my insider experience can serve to enhance description and analysis.

10 SPECIFICS ON METHOD

10.1 Location

This section is ordered around Glesne and Peshkin's questions regarding research site. First, "why was the site chosen for study?"²⁸¹. As described above, Central Presbyterian offers a specific dynamic which aids the research aims. Reformed Charismatics can be an elusive group to study, with an incredible amount of context specific, personal variety. Central Presbyterian offers a large enough faith community with a significant sample size of Reformed Charismatics all from one congregational context. Thus, there is a compelling dynamic between diversity and specificity. The

²⁸¹ Corrine Glesne, *Becoming Qualitative Researchers : An Introduction* (White Plains, N.Y. : Longman, 1992), 154.

sample size is substantial enough to explore at depth and similar enough to allow focused comparison and contextual analysis.

Central Presbyterian has over 2,000 members. The church conducts five separate worship services on Sundays to accommodate the number of regular attendees. The staff itself number nearly one hundred, depending on roles and employment status. However, Swinton and Mowat argue the nature of the sample in qualitative research is more significant than its size.²⁸² They offer a three-fold typology of sampling. First, and least effective, is “opportunistic” sampling. This is simply studying whomever is at hand and easily available. Second is “theoretical” in which the distinguishing characteristic is on going sampling as the study progresses.²⁸³ As new insights are discovered, sampling adjusts, new interviews or resources are explored for greater clarity. With the final type, “purposive,” research subjects are chosen at one time based on specific criterion as a rich sample set. This study takes a mixed approach of both “theoretical” and “purposive,” identifying an initial group of twenty-five Reformed Charismatics at Central Presbyterian and then through the research process staying open to identifying new informants as well as undertaking further interviews as needed with the initial sample set to clarify new variables or observations. Sample size is elaborated on more below in the section on interviews.

It is important to acknowledge limitations in the use of one congregation as the research site. Attempting to draw general conclusions about Reformed Charismatics more broadly should be done with caution and a critical eye. By focusing on just Central Presbyterian, this project falls more in line with the approach Creswell defines

²⁸² Swinton, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 204.

²⁸³ Swinton, 204–5.

as a critical case.²⁸⁴ A critical case offers specific information about a topic by identifying a single culture sharing social group that is well defined and offers rich examples of the topic. As Wolcott observes,

Just as no researcher as fieldworker can ever hope to get the whole story down to every last little detail, no researcher as author can ever expect to tell the whole story either. One way to circumvent the problem of never being able to tell the whole story is to focus on only one or two aspects, creating a story-within-a-story in which the essence (but not the detail) of the whole is revealed or reflected in microcosm.²⁸⁵

Central Presbyterian has the potential to offer such a microcosm. Cessationist churches may not even have a Charismatic subgroup, or at least one which is more challenging to identify and study. Studying a congregation in which Reformed Charismatics are the theological norm, while valuable, presents different data. In many ways it is more akin to studies of independent Charismatic churches. Instead, Central Presbyterian offers a Reformed congregation which fits with Creswell's "intensity" sampling strategy of information rich resources which "manifest the phenomenon intensely, but not extremely"²⁸⁶. That said, focus on the particular, like in this study, especially a congregation that offers the 'middle ground' sample, will benefit from similar studies either of another congregation or a more diverse sample set of churches.

There is also an element to choosing Central Presbyterian because of what Creswell terms "convenience cases". As described above in the section on autoethnography, my past involvement at Central Presbyterian allows opportunities for more transparent and in-depth access to the at times elusive private faith of Reformed

²⁸⁴ John W Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design : Choosing among Five Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Thousand Oaks, CA : SAGE, 2007), 157.

²⁸⁵ Harry F. Wolcott, *Transforming Qualitative Data : Description, Analysis and Interpretation* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Thousand Oaks, Calif., 1994), 19.

²⁸⁶ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design : Choosing among Five Approaches*, 158.

Charismatics who are well aware of the potential conflicts sharing their views may cause. As Rubin and Rubin point out, with qualitative interviewing,

Having good access is so important that sometimes researchers choose the site or the research problem because they have good access. One of Herb's students was a former professional football player. Since access for him was easy, he decided to study the university's football team.²⁸⁷

While my prior relationship with Central Presbyterian offers the benefit of deeper understanding of some of the subtle nuances of theology and praxis it can also come with the liability of blind spots in missing diversity in the data because of pre-formed conclusions. Also, having prior knowledge of who the Reformed Charismatics are to interview and first-hand knowledge of their contextually specific experience allows for more rapport, trust and possibly deeper understanding, but it can limit the diversity of the research data by overlooking other key informants I and others are not aware of.

“What will be done at the site during the research study?”²⁸⁸ Research activities onsite primarily involved participant observation of specific social gatherings and rituals. This included, but was not limited to, Sunday corporate worship services and specific prayer gatherings conducted by designated prayer groups. Most interviews were conducted off-site at separate times and convenient locations.

“How much time will be spent at the site by the researchers?”²⁸⁹ Research was conducted over an eight month period with onsite visits as needed for fulfilling the aims of the participant observation. A week was spent at the church in the summer of 2017 attending corporate worship services, prayer meetings and various campus visits at different times and days to observe activities on location. A further visit was conducted in November at a weekend prayer retreat hosted off site. Observation

²⁸⁷ Herbert J Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing : The Art of Hearing Data*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Thousand Oaks, Calif. : SAGE, 2012), 52.

²⁸⁸ Glesne, *Becoming Qualitative Researchers : An Introduction*, 154.

²⁸⁹ Glesne, 154.

occurred periodically over the eight months at Sunday corporate worship services.

Additional time was spent conducting formal and ad hoc interviews.

“Will the researcher’s presence be disruptive?”²⁹⁰ I was the sole researcher and my presence onsite was not disruptive. During larger social group gatherings like corporate worship services few congregants were aware of my presence as I was immersed in the gathered community, not leading or ‘upfront’ conducting any of the rituals and activities. The prayer group events were smaller in size and my presence was noticed and had an impact.

“How will the results be reported?”²⁹¹ Results are reported in the dissertation. However, I made drafts available to interview participants for feedback before submission. Also, senior leadership of the congregation have expressed interest in results made available post-study.

“What will the gatekeeper, the participants and the site gain from the study?”²⁹² For those interviewed it was an opportunity to voice their experiences and perspectives and be heard by an interested party. The “gatekeeper” or senior leadership may gain insights into their congregation, particularly the experience of Reformed Charismatics within the faith community.

10.2 Participant Observation

The participant observation conducted in this study is akin to what Stevens labels “observer-as-participant”²⁹³. The period of participation was short and focused, and the presence of the researcher was acknowledged. This is different from “complete participant” characterized by sustained, but concealed immersion and involvement in a

²⁹⁰ Glesne, 154.

²⁹¹ Glesne, 154.

²⁹² Glesne, 154.

²⁹³ James H. S Steven, *Worship in the Spirit : Charismatic Worship in the Church of England* (Waynesboro Georgia, 2002), 39–42.

social group. As described above, autoethnography is utilized to access data from an eight year period of complete participation at Central.

Central Presbyterian, again, is a large congregation allowing multiple segments or social groups to thrive under one congregational ‘roof’. There are activities that tend to attract and cultivate Reformed Charismatics, such as the inner healing prayer team, anointing prayer team and even a fringe deliverance ministry. Along with participant observation among these small prayer groups, time was also spent participating in and observing Sunday morning corporate worship gatherings. These gatherings are a ‘live’ demonstration of the dominant or common congregational culture of Central Presbyterian. Reformed Charismatics attend these various worship services and they create an opportunity to observe how Reformed and Charismatic theological norms clash, co-exist and adapt to one another.

As noted above, my prior experience at Central Presbyterian will inform and influence the participant observation in multiple ways. It is crucial to acknowledge, as much as I am an ‘outsider’ I am in many ways relationally, culturally and as a Reformed Charismatic myself coming to the participant observation as an insider. I have ‘lived and breathed’ through first-hand experience many of the social dynamics within the wider congregation and witnessed subtleties in the expression and enforcement of theological norms. I have seen elusive dividing lines between what I am framing as Reformed and Charismatic theologies within the beliefs and practices of Central Presbyterian.

J. Steven encountered a similar dynamic in his research of Charismatic churches in England. He served as a curate in one of these congregations, prior to conducting his formal fieldwork. He was a priest during a period when Charismatic theology and praxis was having a particular impact. When returning as a researcher, he found his

time as a priest uniquely prepared him to engage the topic. He experienced it as a re-entering into the field he had already explored unintentionally as a pastoral ethnographer.²⁹⁴ However, Scharen, echoing the warnings of others advocating for ethnography in ecclesiology, questions blurring the lines between pastoral ministry and formal ethnographic research. While prior personal and vocational and even educational experience in a particular research topic can serve as an aid it must be with caution and ‘eyes wide open’.²⁹⁵ While autoethnographic advantages are leveraged in this research project, such warnings are heeded as well.

While attending these events and gatherings I primarily observed through a lens of theological analysis. Attention was on what Central Presbyterian and particularly the Reformed Charismatics within the congregation believe and practice. In participant observation, this involves looking at “activities” and “artefacts” and listening to “accounts”.²⁹⁶

10.2.1 Activities

As Ammerman claims, “Congregations create their culture, in large part, through the things they do together.”²⁹⁷ This includes rituals, most exemplified by the weekly worship service or event. Sunday services at Central Presbyterian are well planned and ordered. While music and sermon content follows a denominational liturgical calendar and a customary order set by pastoral staff and leaders, it is always designed with the needs, expectations and theological norms of the audience in mind. For Ammerman, these corporate events are “meant to express the unifying vision of the

²⁹⁴ Steven, 39–40.

²⁹⁵ Scharen and Vigen, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 43.

²⁹⁶ Nancy Tatom Ammerman, “Culture and Identity in the Congregation,” in *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*, ed. Nancy Tatom Ammerman (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 84.

²⁹⁷ Ammerman, 84.

congregation.”²⁹⁸ They simultaneously express who they are and shape who they are. Ritual elements are symbolic. Mediums of communication, from spoken language in prayers, sermons, even announcements, musical scores and lyrics, art, architecture including furniture arrangement are chosen with intentionality and can in many ways take on a life of their own in the interpretations of the congregation. A section of analysis in chapter six is focused on corporate weekly worship at Central.

Attention to the cultural significance of internal activities rather than just external or overt activities is also important. As Schreiter argues, while at times there is alignment there can also be direct contradiction between a congregation’s more formal, explicit expression of belief and more implicit, operative perspectives and praxis.²⁹⁹ Interviews of Reformed Charismatics proved a significant resource for these internal, implicit contradictions. Explicit theology in this study was collected through participant observation at Sunday corporate worship gatherings, onsite visits of the campus with attention to layout, décor, onsite advertising and the like as well as documentary analysis of the church’s website, strategic plan and various other church publications.

While these are all likely sources for expression of explicit theology, Schreiter oversimplifies the extent they “reflect theology that guides the congregation’s life and represent its understanding of God”³⁰⁰. Explicit expression can be debated and diverse. A mission statement may have been forged through partisan debate and more realistically express a neutral and therefore hazy compromise not reflecting any unifying vision the congregants ascribe to. This can also occur when such statements

²⁹⁸ Ammerman, 84.

²⁹⁹ Robert J. Schreiter, “Theology in the Congregation: Discovering and Doing,” in *Studying Congregations : A New Handbook*, ed. Nancy Tatom Ammerman (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 31.

³⁰⁰ Schreiter, 31.

are crafted by a minority in leadership at a specific time. These were all issues confronted in participant observation at Central. The same nuance is at play in sermons or music choices. Central Presbyterian has a team of preachers who do not always share the same explicit theology. Some preachers or music leaders are more open to Charismatic theology and praxis than others who share the same pulpit. The discerning participant observer must attend to the debates playing out over explicit theology, recognize the diversity among official statements and formal expressions, not just the diversity between the espoused and operant theologies within the congregation.

Schreiter defines implicit theology as “fragments of theologies that inform the congregation’s life but are not necessarily acknowledged or overtly expressed”³⁰¹. He emphasizes the diversity and debate characteristic of implicit theology. Explicit theology lends itself to more systematic articulation and therefore academic identification, analysis and critique. Implicit theology, coming in more informal patterns of praxis and anecdotal and even subconscious articulations of belief make it more difficult to create a holistic picture of a congregation’s norms. Much depends on the researcher’s own perceptions and with what and whom they are exposed to within the constraints and limitations of time and access. But, as Schreiter argues, implicit theologies,

are crucial for understanding any congregation’s life. These implicit theologies may often guide the congregation more surely than does its mission statement. They may reflect, too, truths about the congregation no one wants to hear.³⁰²

While explicitly articulated theology may affirm many elements associated with Charismatic theology and praxis, congregants and leaders alike will know what forms of ritual and personal expression are sanctioned in what settings. Just because the call to worship to begin the weekly corporate event expresses a freedom to worship in

³⁰¹ Schreiter, 31.

³⁰² Schreiter, 31.

whatever way one feels comfortable, an insider will know the various implicit restrictions and how they are enforced. Again, implicit theology was accessed through interviews and autoethnography.

10.2.2 Artefacts

In addition to Ammerman's category of "activities" to watch while conducting participant observation, she also highlights the significance of "artefacts," or the things congregations make, in articulating and shaping congregational norms.

Just as rituals and activities structure the congregation's time together, so its buildings and furnishings, altars and holy books, even cribs and dishes, structure its space.³⁰³

The most obvious artefact for many congregations is the building, inclusive of its location geographically, its architectural design and the various furnishing, art and physical layout of the interior. All these elements of a church building can speak to views about God, relationships, values and behaviours.

Physical space impacts more than just the logistics of occupants, it can give clues to the ways things are done. The arrangement and size of office space can reveal details about positional power and influence. There is a noticeable difference when walking through the various cubicles and smaller private offices of Central Presbyterian as compared to the spacious office of the senior pastor of the church. The main reception area to the office is located deep within the building. An outsider, unfamiliar with the layout, faces a challenge getting through the various closed doors to find a human to interact with during normal office hours on a typical weekday. Each pastor or senior leader has a closed-door office, usually with a designated administrative assistant outside in a cubicle. Administrative support staff are the first human contact for someone who has made it to the interior offices. Both the senior

³⁰³ Ammerman, "Culture and Identity in the Congregation," 91.

pastor and senior music conductor have the largest offices. Each are located the furthest back from the more public reception area. In the case of Central Presbyterian, size and privacy of office space correlates to prominence on stage during the weekly worship event. Both the senior leader's sermon and the music conductor's choir, band or orchestra make up nearly 85% of the typically fifty five minute event.

However, caution is taken in this study to not over-interpret the meaning of such artefacts, particularly as an outside researcher. Significant details may elude casual observation and many informants. The current senior pastor at Central did not contribute to the design of his office, nor the main building. A significant amount of his work week is spent outside of the church building entirely, often preparing sermons at home or meeting with people in various locations of the city. Thus, current symbolism and use of space may be dramatically different from the intent of the original occupants. For example, at Central Presbyterian the substantial and fixed pulpit isn't even used by the current team of preachers. Sermons are delivered lower on the stage or at the same level as the congregation with only a small music stand for notes. This change reveals something about the intention of the preaching team, as does their decision to shed traditional robes for business attire. In short, some artefacts may be rich in theological meaning, others irrelevant, made obsolete by changing times and trends. Interpretations of these various artefacts, like the meaning and significance of various activities, will be diverse and debated. Thus, in this project, significant value is placed on Reformed Charismatic description and interpretation of artefacts as articulated in interviews.

10.2.3 Accounts

Ammerman's third category to attend to in participant observation is listening to "accounts":

Whenever we share experiences, we talk about them, and in the talking we come to understand more about what the experience meant in the first place [...] Listening for how people talk to each other is critical to understanding their culture.³⁰⁴

Accessing informal accounts and the implicit theology of Central Presbyterian through participant observation involves engaging as much as possible with both the religious and non-religious talk of everyday life. These are the conversations members of the social group have with each other. Attention is given to the language used, the topics discussed, the verbal and nonverbal social cues of ‘the way we do things’ here. Per Marti,

paying close attention to the regular, everyday dialogue of a people or place is also a productive arena for revealing theology(ies). To take this analytical stance, the researcher need not be concerned to interrogate theological language nor (even worse) to selectively “listen” only for theologically-explicit language and exclude the rest. Instead, paying attention to everyday dialogue asserts that all practice may be relevant. Careful analysis is required since leaders and members of a place may not themselves be intentionally aware of what may be relevant for uncovering the implicit theology(ies) of a site. Most importantly, it is crucial to remember that merely being a member of a religious group does not mean that the member understands the group—especially in relation to an investigator’s research agenda.³⁰⁵

My time as a pastor, recounted through autoethnography, proved the best resource for everyday accounts in the congregation. The longer one spends in a community and the more carefully one listens, both diversity of views and areas of common agreement become more apparent. It is important to listen for favourite characters or stories that are focused on more often.³⁰⁶ Even routine actions may reveal beliefs about humans, life together in relationship, who God is, what God is like, and what God expects from people. This can be discerned in how people treat each other, how they treat someone new or an outsider, what objects, events or situations get special attention and care,

³⁰⁴ Ammerman, “Culture and Identity in the Congregation,” 94.

³⁰⁵ Marti, “Found Theologies versus Imposed Theologies: Remarks on Theology and Ethnography from a Sociological Perspective,” 165.

³⁰⁶ Ammerman, “Culture and Identity in the Congregation,” 100.

what is discussed openly versus reserved for private conversation. Also, times of personal or corporate trauma can reveal beliefs through how people comfort each other and interpret what they are experiencing. The same can be said for conflict within the community or with outside real or perceived threats. How the conflict is actually handled as well as what the tension is about reveal implicit beliefs. Often, conflict only arises between those who care and are committed to the congregation, willing to take the risk of engaging in the challenge of disagreements.³⁰⁷ I was exposed to all of the above in my pastoral role in the congregation.

There are many points of contention within the community of Central Presbyterian and a myriad of conflict resolution and communication styles employed to address them depending on which individuals or groups are at odds with one another. It is rare an internal controversy engages the entire congregation. Most often conflict impacts special interest groups related to issues that only certain members have an opinion about. An observation in Hopewell's research of congregations is applicable here. A pastor reflecting on conflict in his congregation observed

It was the damndest thing. I preach unorthodox, even heretical sermons fairly often, and, three years ago, the board took the results of the sale of some property, over a million dollars, and set the proceeds aside [...] for the meeting of human need in this city. There's never a peep about the preaching, nor a single complaint about that dramatic action on the part of the board. But when we said that we wanted to move the pulpit a couple of meters to the left and the lectern just a couple to the right, there was a [...] storm, and that is not too strong a term.³⁰⁸

An example at Central Presbyterian is when clergy attire changed to no longer wearing robes during Sunday services. In the context of various other changes to the 'style' of weekly corporate gatherings aimed at making the symbols and language of the church

³⁰⁷ Carl S. Dudley, "Dynamics of Congregational Life," in *Studying Congregations : A New Handbook*, ed. Nancy Tatom Ammerman (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 119.

³⁰⁸ James F. Hopewell, *Congregation : Stories and Structures* (London: SCM, 1988), 7.

more culturally relevant, this particular adjustment proved highly controversial. Again this was not congregation wide, but by enough people with enough influence it required substantial effort to mitigate. All the while many other seemingly consequential issues went unnoticed.

Another method for listening to “accounts” is through documentary analysis. The Presbyterian Church (USA) denomination has substantial documentation ranging from core doctrinal and polity statements in the Book of Confessions³⁰⁹ and Book of Order³¹⁰ to various resources designed for use in everything from weekly liturgical worship events to age specific Christian education. For the particular theology of Central Presbyterian, documents produced by the church itself provide the best data. The church has designated communications staff producing a monthly magazine, weekly bulletins, a carefully managed website and a myriad of promotional material. Sermons and other formal teaching material are archived and transcribed, available online ‘on demand’. Internal documents related to one to five year strategic plans for the entire church are a source of documentary analysis. Minutes from monthly Session meetings (comprised of representative ruling elders and specific staff members) provide insight into specific decisions and issues facing the community. Analysis of financial documents like the church budget also reveal major priorities.

It is important when using these documents to understand their purpose. Much of the website, monthly newsletter and weekly bulletin are meant to both inform and persuade, encouraging greater participation in church activities. Session minutes are designed to record decisions, but rarely provide nuanced detail of the issues nor

³⁰⁹ *Book of Confessions: The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Part I* (Louisville, KY: The Office of the General Assembly Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2014).

³¹⁰ *Book of Order 2017-2019: The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Part II* (Louisville, KY: The Office of the General Assembly Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2017).

divergent viewpoints. Throughout these various documents is ‘vision’ language,³¹¹ articulating who the church aspires to be. Thus, a majority of these documents provide insights into the explicit theology of the congregation. The senior leader, Rev. Dale, articulated how some of the data, specifically membership rolls, does not adequately describe the actual make up of the congregation. And, on the whole, documents offer limited information about Reformed Charismatics and their experience as a minority.

Historical accounts are also an important piece of a congregation’s theology and identity. This includes not only what is remembered, but how it is remembered. Special attention needs to be given to the significance, the meaning and the plot development articulated through the accounts of historical events, people and circumstances. An historical reconstruction of the Central’s founding and growth, with particular attention to Charismatic influence is offered in the next chapter.

Attention is also given to symbols, images and metaphors. That said, there can be agreement about a symbol’s significance, but different views on meaning. V.

Turner labels this “multivocality,”³¹². As Ammerman describes:

Most helpful to the interpreter of a congregational culture are the more portent reminders of the values this group holds dearest, the symbols that evoke a more visceral response which is less easily pinned down. The symbols we are looking for are the ones with high levels of emotion and low levels of specificity about their explicit meaning³¹³

For example, centre stage and prominent in the sanctuary of Central Presbyterian is a two story tall cross affixed to the wall behind the stage. It is visible from every seat in the room and never obscured by any other piece of furnishing or temporary display.

Core to Central Presbyterian’s identity and teaching is Christ-centeredness. In the face

³¹¹ Marti, “Found Theologies versus Imposed Theologies: Remarks on Theology and Ethnography from a Sociological Perspective,” 163.

³¹² Victor Witter Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors : Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2007), 29.

³¹³ Ammerman, “Culture and Identity in the Congregation,” 97.

of relativity in the surrounding culture and even in the national Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) denomination, Central Presbyterian maintains an exclusive view of the person and role of Jesus of Nazareth in the story of Christian faith. Jesus is Lord and Saviour (often phrased as Leader and Forgiver). Whether expressed in sermons, music, prayers or church documents, Jesus' name is often used specifically and nothing is allowed to obscure or replace this.

10.2.4 Participant Observation in Summary

As detailed above, 'activities' proved the most revealing of Central Presbyterian norms and provided the most significant context for the 'accounts' gathered from interviews of Reformed Charismatics. What the congregation did together, and insider accounts of personal experience in these settings, opened up the nuance of minority theological tensions. 'Artefacts' were helpful, but as described above, some were outdated, relics of their original creators who were no longer at the church. Or due to the rapid change and growth of the congregation, artefacts had diverse and debated meaning. Also as noted above, accounts from documentary analysis could be used to undergird interviews or participant observation of activities; but, on the whole, they expressed explicit theology of the majority, or more precisely the leadership of the church, and rarely offered the level of detail available from informants and autoethnography privy to implicit theology. Thus, interview and autoethnographic data proved the most revealing and the most interesting to gather and analyse. Informant accounts and my own prior experience at the church made participant observation come alive as subtle norms and clues, rarely explicitly stated or enforced, became much more apparent.

10.3 Interviews

Interviews not only compliment and inform participant observation,³¹⁴ in this study they are the primary source for insights into the beliefs, experiences and praxis of Reformed Charismatics. Interviews are particularly valuable in accessing individual and minority views. They provide detail on individual interpretations of private experience with important specificity. This allows observations to be explored more deeply and for testing conclusions against diverse insider views.

Anonymity was offered to informants in an effort to protect confidentiality. The sensitive nature of the topic not only meant interviewees were asked to share personally about themselves, but also share perspectives about dissatisfaction and conflict in the congregation. This at times involved disclosing information they had not shared publicly or directly with other individuals involved. An alias was assigned to each informant and is reflected in the footnotes used to code each interview.

Multiple interview methods were utilized in this project. Some took place onsite during participant observation in ad hoc conversations. More formal interviews of select informants were semi-structured. Interviews were either conducted in person at a convenient, safe location or by phone or video conference.³¹⁵ A standard set of questions was used to guide the interview on relevant topics:

Has God spoken to you? Have you felt God's presence? Tell me about any experiences.

What do you think/believe leads to spiritual growth? What has been most significant in your faith development?

Tell me about your involvement in the church. How has being part of this church helped and supported you and your spiritual growth? When in the life of the church do you feel closest to God? What has changed since you have been

³¹⁴ Scott L. Thuma, "Methods for Congregational Study," in *Studying Congregations : A New Handbook*, ed. Nancy Tatom Ammerman (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 203.

³¹⁵ See Appendix for Interview Information Sheet and Disclosure Form.

part of the church? In what ways do you feel the congregation may be limited or losing touch with God?

Are there ways you adjust what you do, say, how you pray, worship etc. because you are at Central Presbyterian? What happens when someone violates a rule or norm? How are these rules or norms enforced? (To find out, I may inquire about a few key events in the history of the church that reveal possible conflicts in values.) Describe someone who is respected in the church and someone seen as an embarrassment.

Do you ever go to other churches, conferences, events or opportunities through other faith communities, organizations or leaders? If so, describe your experiences and the impact on you. Have you ever been part of another congregation? Why did you come to this church?

Conversations unfolded naturally with new relevant questions emerging during the dialogue.³¹⁶

The primary interview approach was what Rubin and Rubin describe as cultural interviewing. Priority is on personal experience and personal interpretation of the social groups 'way of life'.³¹⁷ Cultural interviewing is designed less around "targeted questions" and more on active listening on the part of the interviewer.³¹⁸ This allows interviewees to identify what is important to them, not simply react to the agenda of the researcher. Room is given for the interviewee to unintentionally articulate cultural norms and behaviours he may not even be aware of. For example, Reformed Charismatics were asked about their experience of the corporate weekly worship event. Rather than focusing on particular elements, the aim was to make room for an interviewee to describe the meaning and symbolism of the service and how they experience implicit and explicit behavioural norms.

Direct questions about theological views or doctrinal debates were limited. Per Hopewell,

³¹⁶ Cartledge, *Practical Theology: Charismatic and Empirical Perspectives*, 71–72.

³¹⁷ Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, 33.

³¹⁸ Rubin, 34.

After only a few conversations it was evident that a catechetical approach—in which I would ask what an informant understood about some creedal tenet such as the Trinity or salvation—did not plumb the richness of that member's perception of life. It was not that Christian beliefs were superficial aspects of the person's worldview. The problem rather lay in the way my questions were posed. When I would ask respondents to describe some theological topic in their working picture of reality, I translated their ongoing portrayal of life into abstract categories. Not only was abstraction a different operation from the narrative manner by which they usually interpreted their existence, it was also a game that I, their theologically trained interviewer, was by reputation better equipped to play than they. They usually answered questions about the nature of God and redemption in an embarrassed, defensive, or ingratiating way [...] In a local church, members participate in religion more readily than they explain it.³¹⁹

Hopewell instead utilized questions he connects to “supernatural crises”. With open-ended questions that draw on particular experiences and encourage storytelling, interviewees were asked to explore their interpretations of experience at greater depth. Astley suggests several questions to encourage deeper engagement: “Where did you get that? Who told/taught you that? [...] Why is that so important to you? Why does that mean so much to you?”³²⁰ Astley's questions were softened to be less interrogative. For example, “who do you think helped or influenced how you experienced and understood that (particular event or situation)?”. Or, “please describe how this is so important and means so much to you?” Per Thuma, care needs to be taken not to ask too many direct ‘why?’ or ‘what do you mean?’ questions and instead ask for examples or elaborations so as not to put the interviewee on the defensive or in an explanatory mode of discourse.³²¹

The style of the interview, or more specifically the posture of the researcher as interviewer, was what Rubin and Rubin term “responsive interviewing”³²².

³¹⁹ Hopewell, *Congregation : Stories and Structures*, 1988, 68.

³²⁰ Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology : Looking, Listening and Learning in Theology*, Explorations in Pastoral, Practical and Empirical Theology (Aldershot: Aldershot : Ashgate, 2002), 25, 32.

³²¹ Thuma, “Methods for Congregational Study,” 204.

³²² Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing : The Art of Hearing Data*, 39.

Interviewees were treated more as conversation partners rather than a subject of the research. As mentioned, questions were designed to keep the interviewee comfortable, particularly when asked to share vulnerable and private details. The interviewee was treated as the expert and the tone of the conversation was informal and focused on building trust. This included vulnerability and transparency on the part of the interviewer alongside attentive, active listening.³²³ It is similar to what T. Adams describes as “interactive interviewing” in which “researchers and participants share personal and cultural experiences”³²⁴ forming a personal relationship in the course of the interview. Per Rubin and Rubin,

Responsive interviews are gentler than other interviewing styles. Confrontation is kept to a minimum; researchers do not focus on resolving contradictions or dwell on the factual basis of answers, questioning the expertise of the interviewee. The interviewer usually backs away from sensitive material quickly and may ask sensitive questions indirectly, giving the conversational partner the choice whether or not to address an issue.³²⁵

In the context of a safe, honouring relational environment, the interviewee has the opportunity to go deeper with greater vividness, uncovering more complex and nuanced detail than offered in the initial, surface level responses in more structured, formal interviews.³²⁶

Twenty-five informants were formally interviewed, and various ad hoc interviews occurred over the course of the research period. Informants were chosen based on their expertise related to the research topic. The sample size was influenced by the elusiveness and the number of Reformed Charismatics in the congregation. Interviewees are first-hand witnesses who personally experience what it is like to be a Reformed Charismatic at Central.

³²³ Rubin, 36.

³²⁴ Adams, *Autoethnography*, 54–55.

³²⁵ Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing : The Art of Hearing Data*, 37.

³²⁶ Rubin, 102–5.

There is diversity in the sample set based on demographics, length of time at church, level of involvement and differences in beliefs and practices. Ages range from: six over 70 years old, six between 60 – 70 years old, four 50 – 60 years old, four between 40-50 years old and five between 25 – 30 years old. The informants include twelve women and thirteen men. All are Caucasian Americans. They come from a mix of Christian traditions and denominations before their time at Central. Some are or were members of church staff. Some as congregants served in various volunteer leadership roles. Two are founding members of the church and two others were children early in the congregation's formation. Only one interviewee has been at Central less than five years. Informants are a mix of socio-economic levels, education, vocations and marital status.

11 VALIDITY

11.1 Practical Ways to Validate: Triangulation, Accountability, Reflexivity

Data collection and analysis is through a three-fold process of triangulation, reflexivity and accountability. Reflexivity has been explored at length earlier. As Creswell argues,

Clarifying research bias from the outset of the study is important so that the reader understands the researcher's position and any biases or assumptions that impact the inquiry.³²⁷

The point is not to eliminate bias, but acknowledge it, allowing it to both benefit the research process and alert the reader in their own process of disseminating the findings of the study.

Accountability is achieved through a process of both creating an 'audit trail' and soliciting the feedback and critique of colleagues and research participants. This

³²⁷ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design : Choosing among Five Approaches*, 251.

requires maintaining records of data gathered including field notes, transcripts from interviews and other relevant information. Feedback was solicited from dissertation supervisors and participants themselves. “Member checking”³²⁸ or “participant validation”³²⁹ involved presenting data and analysis to research subjects, allowing them to evaluate and edit for accuracy, then incorporating their feedback into the final text.

Triangulation incorporates the above approaches by integrating them. In addition, triangulation involved utilizing multiple methods of inquiry and analysis of data³³⁰. For example, the primary data is from interviews of Reformed Charismatics. However, interview data was triangulated by comparing it with other interviews from the sample set and participant observation. Ethnographic data was also put in mutual critical dialogue with relevant social scientific data and theological reflection.

11.2 Different Validation in Qualitative Research and Quantitative Research

Quantitative research approaches, common in the natural sciences, utilize different criterion in their assessment of validity and rigor. Swinton and Mowat frame the different views epistemologically. “Nomothetic knowledge,” gained through the scientific method, values knowledge that is generalizable, replicable and falsifiable. “Ideographic knowledge,” sought primarily through qualitative inquiry, focuses on particularity, knowledge “discovered in unique, non-replicable experiences”³³¹.

Generalizability is replaced by evaluating data and analysis based on resonance.³³² Does the description resonate with others who have gone through similar experiences? Is it transferable to the particularity of other contexts and situations? Can

³²⁸ Creswell, 252.

³²⁹ Swinton, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 123.

³³⁰ Norman K Denzin and Lincoln, *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2005).

³³¹ Swinton, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 43.

³³² Swinton, 122.

those who only read about the phenomena or social group in the research writing recognize it in the field? Just as “it is not possible to step in the same river twice,”³³³ as the act itself changes the river, two people viewing the same phenomena or social group see it differently. Thus, credibility depends more on the richness of the data, the appropriateness of the research design, thoroughness of the application of method and the vividness in which complex situations are described.³³⁴ This is all enhanced by inclusion of diverse perspectives and outliers who don’t easily fit with the wider data set.³³⁵

12 ETHICS

Ethical concerns arise throughout the research process.³³⁶ Prior to beginning the onsite research necessary approval was acquired both from Durham University and the congregation studied. The executive leadership team of Central Presbyterian reviewed and approved my request to conduct qualitative research in their community. They requested a list of those interviewed, specifics about the events and groups observed and expressed a desire to learn from any insights offered by the project. The research site, university nor financing related to the research has any vested interest in the outcome of the study.

Though studying a group that can experience social resistance and reprisals because of their beliefs and practices, no research participants are members of vulnerable populations. Each participant was provided the information sheet and consent form in Appendix A ensuring they understood their participation was voluntary

³³³ Swinton, 43.

³³⁴ Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing : The Art of Hearing Data*, 17.

³³⁵ Swinton, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 70.

³³⁶ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design : Choosing among Five Approaches*, 58–59.

and confidential. Participants could consent to be named, otherwise identifying details were changed to aid in anonymity. However, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed as my disclosure of prior relationship with the congregation and other details shared by participants may be recognized by a select few with intimate knowledge of the church. Participants were cautioned about this.³³⁷ Data collection had minimal impact on the congregation and participants, and while not guaranteed there are possible benefits to the church and interviewees. My presence on-site was acknowledged with complete transparency related to the purpose and use of the research. Throughout collection, analysis and presentation of data, careful consideration was taken for those being studied. Also, as mentioned above, participants had the opportunity to review the data and analysis and provide editorial feedback.

³³⁷ Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice : An Introduction* (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2008), 95.

Chapter 4: Reformed Charismatics at Central Presbyterian

Walking into Central Presbyterian on a Sunday morning it is apparent this is a large, affluent congregation.



Thousands of well-dressed congregants make their way from high-end vehicles in the parking lot to take their seats in the state of the art facilities in the sanctuary and community centre.



The various programs and events advertised on posters and television screens throughout the lobby suggest there is more going on than meets the eye during Sunday worship services. However, because of the organization's sheer size it is challenging to fully grasp all that is going on behind the scenes and beneath the surface.

This chapter explores Central's congregational theology by first delving into the church's history. Particular focus is on highlighting the history of Charismatic influence in the congregation. Understanding Central's theology also involves understanding the aspirations of the church, expressed through its mission and vision and major programs. Then attention turns to describing the size and diversity of the congregation evident in the various programs and events occurring concurrently during any given week. Special attention is on the event where all gather: Sunday worship services. Incorporated into this account is a look behind the scenes at the influential role of the church's paid staff. Then, attention is put on describing the youth ministry, a specific example of Reformed Charismatic culture at Central.

13 HISTORY OF CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN

Important to note, Central has no formal or official written or oral account of its history. Any reconstruction is dependent on taking various information points and constructing a cohesive narrative.

13.1 Congregational Growth

The history of the church is at times recounted based on church buildings. The congregation first met together in the 1950s in a vacant funeral parlour before the eventual construction of a church building several blocks from the city centre in the 1960s.³³⁸ It was the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) denomination's first church plant in

³³⁸ Interview with "Barry and Nan," April 3, 2017.

the city, started by locals attending the flagship Presbyterian church in a nearby large urban area.

From its beginning, Central was known for bible centred teaching, commitment to conservative Reformed theology and focus on meeting the needs of families in the congregation. Designated children's programs were available from the outset on Sunday mornings, offering age appropriate teaching and a more orderly adult only worship service in the sanctuary. Rare among churches in the community, Central also provided a paid part time position for a dedicated youth pastor, focused on teenagers. These characteristics have remained consistent throughout the history of the church, even through the culturally and theologically tumultuous decades of the 1960s and 1970s. While Presbyterian (U.S.A.) national denominational governing bodies became more liberal, exploring universalism and in later decades redefinition of ordination standards, Central has remained committed to conservative evangelicalism.

As the congregation grew, the 'A frame' church building became the education wing and a building four times the size with a sanctuary, basketball gymnasium and expansive office space was built next to it. The new campus was completed with the addition of a sea of pavement serving as a parking lot. The building in many ways reflects the core values and programs of the church. Music and preaching are centre stage, symbolized by the massive pipe organ and elevated pulpit on opposite sides of a thirty foot wooden cross framing the backdrop of the sanctuary.



The largest offices and paychecks are reserved for the senior pastor and music director. These two men's work is seen as driving attendance numbers and subsequently the church budget, allowing Central to provide the myriad of other programs and staff dedicated to meeting the diverse needs of the congregation.

The church continued to grow stretching the capabilities of the 800 person capacity sanctuary. Soon, the original 'A frame' sanctuary was demolished and replaced by a new education wing accommodating the children and youth programs, various other events and a private alternative high school. Multiple Sunday services were created to accommodate increased attendance. The hardwood floor basketball court is transformed each Sunday into a carpeted worship centre so three "modern worship services" can co-exist with the "traditional" services in the sanctuary.



A carefully orchestrated traffic pattern in the parking lot expanded to parking available at neighbouring schools, empty on a Sunday morning. Between the five Sunday services, various parking shuttles and a large team of ushers and attendants, on average 2,500 attendees move through the church building on a Sunday morning and evening.

This building expansion coincided with increased staffing and finances. Central Presbyterian now has eight ordained ministers and seventy full or part time staff. A team of Session members and finance department staff manage a multi-million dollar annual budget as well as a growing portfolio of buildings, residences and investments.

13.2 A Changing City

Another important account of the church's history is that of the surrounding community and the church's relationship with it. Barry and Nan, founding members at Central, as well as others interviewed, recounted times when the city felt more like a town. It was a suburban bedroom community for a major urban centre across the lake. This has dramatically changed over the years. The population has continued to expand

alongside scope and size of infrastructure. Once a mixture of affluent families living on the lake and middle class families further eastward, the population has swelled to a more ethnically and socio-economically diverse city. Long-time locals tell stories of small local businesses, even dirt roads, before the centre of town became its own retail, financial and technology centre with a myriad of thirty-five story apartment complexes, national chain stores and office buildings.³³⁹



The most dramatic changes can be linked to the regions own technology boom. While not on the scale or fame of Silicon Valley, major global technology companies got their start and made their home in Central Presbyterian's city. This brought dramatic expansions in wealth, job opportunities, government, medical and retail expansion and increased costs of living and traffic.

Housing costs and traffic are regular topics of conversation as locals adjust their daily schedules around long commutes and their budgets to rapidly increasing expenses. Just in the last five years rental and home ownership expenses have nearly doubled throughout the region, widening the disparity between socio-economic classes. Both of these issues have impacted the church in specific ways. Multiple interviewees spoke of planning their involvement in church activities around the constraints of

³³⁹ Interview with "Lori," August 3, 2017.

traffic. And the cost of housing alone has proved a major challenge to church hiring and compensation of current employees.

With the demand for specialised labour and cost of living, the general population surrounding Central Presbyterian is disproportionately higher educated and wealthier than neighbouring cities and dramatically so in nationwide or global comparisons.³⁴⁰ However, increases in high paying, highly competitive jobs and subsequent community-wide increases in wealth have resulted in increased demand for unskilled labour in the service sector. These factors have all impacted ethnic diversity.³⁴¹

What has this all meant for Central Presbyterian? Mention has already been made of the numeric growth of the congregation alongside the growth of the surrounding city. And again, the church's finances have increased as the congregation has grown not only in size but private wealth. Changing demographics and socio-economic disparity have also created opportunities for the church to participate actively in community service and social programs. A current major initiative of church staff and Session is actively addressing racial inequality and injustice in their community. However, by degree, Central Presbyterian's racial makeup has remained largely the same. Once garnering the reputation of a suburban 'country club' church, focused on meeting the needs of their own congregation, Central Presbyterian is now known as a dynamic service organization on the radar of city officials for their significant local impact.

³⁴⁰ Survey from www.towncharts.com cites 85% of adults have some college or associate degree. 64% have Bachelors degrees or higher. The national average in the United States is 30%.

³⁴¹ U.S. Census data categorizes the population as 55.9% White, 29.7% Asian, 2.26% Black or African American, www.factfinder.census.gov.

13.3 Charismatic Influence

The history of the impact of Charismatic theology and praxis on the congregation is constructed from interviews with Reformed Charismatics themselves, particularly Nan and Barry who have been part of the church since its founding over sixty years ago.³⁴² As Nan recounts there has always been a Charismatic stream within the congregation going back to the early days when the church met in the funeral parlour on Sundays. It has never been the dominant culture of the entire congregation, rarely the focus of the pastors or leadership of the church, but always present in various forms. Many of these forms are characteristic of historical accounts of the wider Pentecostal impact on mainline congregations.

For example, during the height of the Charismatic Renewal in the 1960s and 1970s a small-scale renewal movement arose among Central congregants. This was fuelled both by Reformed Charismatics already in the congregation and the outside influence of Charismatic leaders and groups. While these outside leaders were never invited to Central Presbyterian to speak, they were accessible nearby. A major national leader in the Charismatic Renewal pastored a Lutheran congregation in a neighbouring city and multiple interviewees recounted experiences from attending his meetings.

Nan described an occasion from this period when a woman stood and “spoke in tongues” during a Central Presbyterian Sunday service. Another congregant interpreted the glossolalia on the spot. The senior pastor leading the service was taken aback, but continued the planned liturgy as if nothing happened. Uncomfortable with such displays he waited until after the service concluded, met with the woman privately

³⁴² Interview with “Nan and Barry,” April 3, 2017.

and instructed her to refrain from doing it again. Shortly after, this woman left Central Presbyterian.³⁴³

This particular senior pastor confided in Nan his struggle with how to handle congregants' intensifying interest in spiritual experience. He was regularly getting books on his desk written by Charismatic Renewalists. There were continued, unexpected, out of control expressions of emotion or Charismatic praxis. For those experiencing the Charismatic Renewal it was an exciting time and some made it their mission to be "mini-evangelists" seeking to shift the entire church. Those not experiencing it resisted feeling pressured. The senior pastor rejected the theology, did not trust the praxis and did not want relational tension in his congregation. But, through the positive affirmation and example of those like Nan, he was unwilling to take a hard cessationist line and shut down Charismatic expression entirely. Instead, as became a consistent hallmark of Central Presbyterian throughout its history, Charismatics were encouraged to keep their praxis private.

This approach in part inspired the establishment of Charismatic para-church groups. The House of Andrew, founded by a member of Central Presbyterian in the 1960s, focused on serving youth and addicts in the local community. Created as a separate non-denominational organization, the founders sought pastoral approval from Central Presbyterian leadership and the bulk of funding and volunteer resources were from Central. Charismatic spirituality was woven into the activities of the organization, but particularly visible during bi-weekly prayer and worship gatherings. While focused on serving addicts, it became a resource for Reformed Charismatics to grow and more openly express their spirituality outside of the constraints imposed during normal church events.

³⁴³ Interview with "Nan and Barry," April 20, 2017.

More formal and organised Charismatic praxis within the congregation is often linked to the efforts of particular pastoral leaders. Those serving in anointing prayer, inner healing prayer, spiritual direction and certain more ad hoc efforts of deliverance prayer often attribute their involvement to Pastor Tonya. Tonya affirmed openness to direct partnership with divine activity and the immanent presence of spiritual beings, but in a more contemplative than emotionally expressive style. Those under her leadership were trained to seek God's direct guidance and obediently respond, but in reserved ways which didn't draw attention.

Others, when describing their experience of Charismatic spirituality, highlight the youth ministry while I was youth pastor. Through separate Sunday morning youth worship services, Wednesday youth group meetings, various youth specific events and activities, the youth program were in a sense a separate church within the larger congregation with its own norms. Youth staff, adult volunteers, and teenage participants were experiencing a hybrid independent Charismatic congregation of sorts.

While none of these internal programs ultimately shaped the majority theology of Central Presbyterian, they had a measurable impact in subtle ways. It was possible for some members of the congregation to experience Charismatic theology and praxis for the first time within their own congregation. In the same way, it created places for those already experiencing Charismatic spirituality to go without having to leave their congregation.

Church wide acceptance of Charismatic theology and praxis is a matter of debate. Some interviewed look back over the last decade and cite a period of intensification that ultimately waned. This intensified period was marked by increased openness by the senior pastor, increased influence of Reformed Charismatic associate pastors and worship leaders and a general uptick in the presence of Charismatic praxis

at corporate church events. It was during this period speakers from Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship were invited to lead a weekend retreat at Central Presbyterian focused on their brand of “soaking prayer,” recounted in a later chapter. But, as evident in the controversy leading up to this event, as well as various other efforts throughout the history of the church, there remained a division between a minority group advocating for Charismatic spirituality opposed by a minority group against it, and the majority of the congregation who in varying degrees did not care or were unaware of the debates. Thus, it is a matter of personal experience and perspective the extent the wider congregation has embraced Charismatic theology and praxis. Jay, a volunteer in the youth ministry, noted significant shifts. While the Charismatic praxis within the youth ministry was not sustained over time, he sensed increased openness and affirmation of Charismatic spirituality at Sunday church services and in his time serving as an elder on Session.³⁴⁴ Brody, who transferred membership from a Charismatic congregation to Central ten years ago, recounted a shift away from focus on the Spirit over the last ten years. He cited, along with others who share this assessment, the departure of multiple pastors and leaders who were Reformed Charismatics and evidence that after a period of intensification theological norms had remained status quo.³⁴⁵ But, for multiple Reformed Charismatics this status quo is positive and satisfies their expectations of what is possible at Central Presbyterian.³⁴⁶

What holds constant is a portrait of a loosely connected, internally diverse group of Reformed Charismatics with a myriad of preferences, perspectives and personal experiences. Individually, and at times collectively, they work out their beliefs and praxis while part of a congregation that in various ways affirms and also

³⁴⁴ Interview with “Jay,” October 15, 2017.

³⁴⁵ Interview with “Brody,” November 11, 2017.

³⁴⁶ Interview with “Rachel,” August 2, 2017.

rejects their spirituality. At times these negotiations are overt, but are often subtle and go unnoticed by the majority. Specific examples are offered below and in subsequent analysis chapters.

14 THE ROADMAP: VISION, MISSION AND FIVE YEAR PLAN

What follows is a first person account of my experience of Reformed Charismatic theological tensions at Central exemplified in a major planning meeting in 2009.³⁴⁷ It provides a window into some of the harder to access decision making processes within the church and highlights norms around Charismatic theology and praxis. I utilize first person narrative as a tool to describe the group process, but also to illuminate aspects of the internal, emotional and relational dynamics Reformed Charismatics experience at Central as a minority.

Forty of us gathered in a room as a select group of church staff and congregational leaders tasked with making a five year plan for the congregation. A PowerPoint presentation was projected on a screen with diagrams describing a pre-fabricated planning process. We were all seated around tables in a 'U'-shape allowing everyone to see one another and look toward the front of the room. Post-it notes were stuck to every wall and even a few windows. "There are two major pieces to any organization's roadmap," Bob, the outside, paid consultant leading the exercise, explained. "First is the 'being side'. It describes our values, our identity and undergirds all of our decisions and actions. The second major component is the 'doing side'. These are the practical goals we have." Bob was a member of the congregation but also a full-fledged business consultant specialized in aligning leadership and resources in organizations around a common plan.

³⁴⁷ Excerpts in this section are taken from a journal recounting firsthand experiences while an associate pastor at Central Presbyterian between June 2004 – December 2011.

At the centre of the Central's "road map" is the mission of "complete spiritual, relational, economic flourishing of the cities to which God has called us and beyond (aka: revival)"³⁴⁸ The group was hesitant to use the phrase revival or renewal, concerned it suggested a narrower focus on spiritual experience or profession of faith. Instead we wanted the broad focus of the flourishing of a city in all spheres and sectors. This was going to happen by bringing "Jesus' healing wherever we live, work, play and learn as the Holy Spirit guides us (aka: missional living)"³⁴⁹. It required being a "warm, multi-ethnic, all-generations community that supports each other, gets beyond news/weather/and sports, and serves together."³⁵⁰ Also, it involved being "a community that equips, empowers, and releases everyone – with an emphasis on youth and young adults."³⁵¹ Key for the group was rooting all the activity in the church in Jesus and his love. Undergirding this 'being side' of the roadmap was the belief that "We act because we believe. We love because we are loved" and through this we become like Jesus.³⁵²

Once the language had been carefully honed and there was general agreement on mission, vision and values of the church, we were tasked with getting into specifics. We needed to identify particular strategies and programs to help us accomplish our major goals. These included worship and teaching that honour and proclaim Jesus as Lord and Saviour – most notably at Sunday church services. There was discussion of financial stewardship to align the significant resources of the congregation with the five year plan. A key programmatic focus was serving the community. This included major service events involving the whole church like an annual "Jubilee Service Day".

³⁴⁸ 'Central Presbyterian' Church Roadmap document.

³⁴⁹ 'Central Presbyterian' Church Roadmap document.

³⁵⁰ 'Central Presbyterian' Church Roadmap document.

³⁵¹ 'Central Presbyterian' Church Roadmap document.

³⁵² 'Central Presbyterian' Church Roadmap document.

It also involved on going projects and partnerships as well as developing ways to connect congregants with needs in the community that fit their area of specialty or vocational training. There was significant discussion about how to make a big church feel smaller by identifying programmatic ways to foster relationship and intimacy among congregants.

Bob led us through a thorough process of corporate brainstorming. Those in the room represented a cross-section of the demographics and leadership of the church. Each of us had ample opportunity to make our views heard by writing our opinions on as many post-it notes as we wanted. But, I was sceptical whether this well intended, days long planning session would actually change anything core to the norms of the church. I was also hesitant to be honest, even if my post-it notes were supposed to be anonymous. Everyone could guess who wrote “raise people from the dead” on a yellow sticky note and placed it under the category of “how to show the community the real Jesus”.

A colleague and friend of mine sensed my restlessness and challenged me to take the risk of saying what I was convinced no one wanted to hear from the minority Charismatic voice in the room. I filled out a few notes, using my usual approach of putting things into language that took the edge off, making it a little more acceptable and easily understood by those present. You don’t say things like “help people get drunk and set them on fire” at Central Presbyterian when talking about spiritual formation. That is insider language reserved for only certain faith communities who are using “drunkenness” to describe being “filled with the Spirit” in reference to certain interpretations of the Pentecost account of Acts 2. And language of “fire” is often in reference to “the Spirit” as well as intense passion or zeal. Instead I wrote “help people trust God and discern his will”. But, it wasn’t long before some of the filters came off,

for better or worse, and I was in a creative flow. About thirty five post-it notes later I had made a substantial sticky note imprint on the wall expressing views more at home in a Pentecostal congregation.

The next task for the group was to take the hundreds of notes on the walls and organize them in groups around common emphases or themes. I watched as mine started to get placed together off in a corner by themselves. They may have fit in the larger categories of serving the community, biblical literacy, responsible financial stewardship and proclaiming Jesus, but the group was having difficulty knowing how to make “casting out demons,” “prophecy” and “healing the sick” fit.

After everyone stepped back from the exercise to debrief, our congregational care pastor described the challenge of knowing how to handle “raising people from the dead” written on one of the post-it notes. Her job was to regularly bury the dead and help grieving families cope. She also oversaw the myriad of illness specific support groups available at the church. These groups focused more on comforting and aiding people in accepting their limitations and grief rather than offering solutions to fix it, through prayer or otherwise. On top of all this, she had the courage to say, she didn’t believe what was on the post-it note anyway.

This was no real surprise, and I began to regret my burst of sticky note productivity. I was used to my perspective being disruptive, offensive and greeted with scepticism. I was rarely overtly, directly questioned or told to stop anything associated with Charismatic spirituality. There may have been twice in my eight years at the church a parent complained about their teenager praying in tongues or a teenager feeling uncomfortable when their friend said they were physically healed through prayer. More often complaints were about whether the youth group was a ‘fit’ for their child and how to make it more fun and appealing to friends not part of the church.

There was also the occasional complaint about the dangers associated with some of the activities conducted, be it building houses in Tijuana, Mexico or a youth group game in which participants drank soda through another's sock. These were all the normal concerns and complaints a youth pastor confronts. When it came specifically to issues around Charismatic theology and praxis, communication was more indirect, hinting that we don't do that here. You can do it in your private life or somewhere out of sight, but not out in the open corporately. And certainly, we weren't going to do this as a whole church.

This is illustrated well by an unusual event on a church 'short term' mission trip to Rwanda. A group of forty congregants and pastors travelled to the country primarily to visit an orphanage Central Presbyterian funded. While there we visited a Rwandan prison detaining those convicted of perpetrating genocide. Reverend Dale, Central's senior pastor, was on the trip and wanted me to preach. We were led to an open-air area of the prison yard and well over a thousand inmates were seated in the dry dirt looking at us seated in chairs on stage. The warden, who spoke and prayed first, explained there was an expedited path toward release from prison and restoration in the community through confession of crimes. Knowing this I focused my remarks on forgiveness, highlighting the power of confession in restoring relationship with God and others.

During my sermon I began to manifest physically--what I had come to interpret, after years of sceptical wrestling with these psychosomatic expressions, as an outward physical expression of a spiritual dynamic occurring in and around my body. I was uncomfortable doing this, not because of the prisoners gathered, or even the Rwandan pastor who was translating my words (and often also mimicking my body posture and sounds), but because of the Central Presbyterian church members behind me. This was

not a youth group trip. This would be the first time many of them saw me teaching and praying this way. At one point the energy inside of me was so strong I yelled in the microphone and over the crowd standing below me the word “Freedom”. It came out more as an inaudible shout or groan. In my mind at the time, I pictured myself like the Israelites standing outside the walls of Jericho yelling and blowing trumpets then seeing walls crumble and fall down before them. In this case the walls were spiritual and relational imprisonment, symbolized by the physical walls of the prison. Simultaneously, feelings of shame and fear mixed inside of me. I wanted to be authentic, but grew increasingly uncomfortable. Some in the crowd smiled. I don’t know why, but I imagined they were mocking me. A woman to the left of the stage shrieked and started yelling. Others had their eyes riveted on me.

I could continue teaching in this style and acting on the many ideas racing through my mind that included praying for physical healing of blindness, for spiritual deliverance and inviting people to move forward who wanted to respond by confessing and receiving forgiveness. Or I could step back, stop the physical manifestations and ease up on the intensity of my preaching. I listened to my fear, concerned I was in over my head. I wasn’t sure if I had permission to teach and pray in this way. I didn’t want to cause a disruption in the crowd that was dangerous. I felt I was standing on the precipice of being out of control and decided to back up away from the edge where I, and everyone around me, would be more comfortable.

Immediately after finishing I returned to my seat, avoiding eye contact with others on the trip. I was anxious about their judgments and resulting consequences when we returned home in my role at the church. I was also disappointed I responded in fear. I wondered what may have happened if I continued despite the risks.

After the program ended, we walked back to our mini-buses and Reverend Dale briskly came up beside me, put his arm around me and said, “I’ve never been more proud and scared by what you were doing.” Later in the week, the night before returning home, the entire group met together to debrief the trip. One woman brought up our time in the prison and particularly when I was teaching. She said she felt this desire to jump out of her seat, off the stage and to pray for people in the crowd. Another man, with a smile on his face, said “I thought the strangest thing I would see in Africa was something African, instead it was Greg.” I smiled politely, but felt shamed. Reverend Dale was quick to assure this man and the rest of the group that nothing similar would happen at Sunday church services at Central once we got back home.

Returning to the five year planning meeting, my collection of ill fitting post-it notes got a name that became a distinct goal on the road map: experiencing the Holy Spirit. Right next to turning outward through acts of service to show the community the real Jesus, alongside excellence in worship services and biblical teaching, was tangible, everyday experiential spirituality. I was starting to wonder if there was a theological shift occurring. However, was putting ‘experiencing the Holy Spirit’ on a five-year plan going to result in widespread change in the congregation’s theology and praxis? There already was a Reformed Charismatic subgroup at Central, described in detail later. In sixty years of the congregation’s life together, it had never expanded beyond a minority. Was this the turning point?

Next participants organized themselves into groups around the major initiatives to strategize specific ways to accomplish each. Everyone self-selected the goal they were going to work on. As the forty people in the room grouped themselves up, it was just Gary and I left sitting together focused on helping people experience the Spirit. Gary was quick to nominate me leader of the group, let me know he didn’t have a clue

how to accomplish the goal, but, in short, didn't want to leave me sitting there by myself. This proved an apt symbolic moment.

15 MANY ACTIVITIES UNDER ONE ROOF

Central Presbyterian makes room for a wide variety of interests and perspectives among congregants. Literally and figuratively there are many things going on under one roof. This is crucial to understanding the context in which Reformed Charismatics navigate and influence the norms of Central. They are one among many different interests and activities with no particular position of significance. Just like the average attender or even committed member may have limited to no knowledge of some of the groups and gatherings described below, Reformed Charismatics themselves can go unnoticed. Also, Reformed Charismatics are a diverse and loosely associated group. They never gather in one event or setting. Some do not interact at all. Reformed Charismatics are interspersed across the various social networks of the congregation organized more based on common interest, age and stage of life, or role in the church than common religious experience or theological views. Understanding Central and Reformed Charismatic influence requires having an adequate sense of all that is going on – the sheer diversity and extent of activity at the church.

On Saturday mornings, Auto Angels is busy servicing cars in the church's 30 stall underground parking garage.



Usually reserved for storage and parking church vehicles, each week a group of fifteen men and one woman turn this space into what by all descriptions is a commercial auto mechanics shop. Sounds of air compressors, the clanking of tools, and even hydraulic car lifts ricochet off the cement walls while their leader Jack can be heard yelling over it all – at times just to be heard, at other times because he is angry and stressed. “What are you doing! I said you only needed to change the fluids. Why did you pull that hose line out?” Jack is the only certified mechanic on the crew. This ministry is his vision. Inspired by the church’s call to “turn outward through acts of service to show the community the real Jesus,” Jack decided to use his specialized training to serve people with car problems. Auto Angels clientele are low income individuals needing auto repair or access to a low cost car refurbished by this team of volunteers. Volunteers range from hobbyists to those looking for something to occupy some time on the weekends and meet new people. It is this latter group that keeps Jack most on his toes as he paces from project to project making sure all the tasks are adequately delegated and no one is doing too much damage.

Directly above the parking garage is the immaculate indoor gymnasium dubbed the Community Centre. While some churches with the financial means build a carpeted multiple purpose room that may include athletic facilities, a member made the

case if the church was to attract the surrounding affluent community they needed to provide high end facilities. He was willing to further his case by making a large designated donation to ensure the surface of the court was well-maintained hardwood.



It is a full size regulation basketball court convertible to two volleyball or badminton courts with a sound system to support aerobic classes. It is arguably one of the best sport courts open to the public free of charge in the city. Sports teams from local schools practice on it. Sport specific “pick up” games are scheduled every night of the week and all versions of yoga, pilates and various aerobic classes during the day. On Sundays the custodial team converts the gym into a worship centre by laying down carpet squares over the entire court, setting up 600 folding chairs and placing mobile curtains to cover the walls and basketball hoops.

On Saturday mornings, while the Auto Angels are working on cars below, the court is reserved for men’s basketball. A volunteer from the church’s membership oversees the time. On occasion there are one or two participants from the congregation, the rest of the thirty men are from throughout the region, some driving as far as an hour to participate. The event is not promoted beyond the schedule posted on

the wall of the gymnasium and the church website. The majority of the men are here through word of mouth. It is the only regular time during the week, aside from badminton matches on Tuesday night, when the ethnic majority is not dramatically Caucasian. Arguably, it is the most ethnically diverse event on the church grounds.

Meanwhile in the library a group of women, all beyond sixty years old, sit in a circle together crocheting. The knitting group meets weekly focused on various stitching projects, including assembling handmade dolls for an orphanage in Guatemala supported by the church. The group is open to anyone interested, but these women are the only regulars and know each other well. The time is spent catching up on the latest news and gossip while they work busily with needle and thread. They've chosen the room because of the comfortable furniture and it is tucked away and quiet. The library is rarely used,



but available for those interested in the collection of one thousand volumes shelved around the room focused on theology, biblical studies and popular Christian literature. These women have snuck in a pot of coffee and homemade baked goods past the sign reading 'no food or drink'. No librarian is on duty. Patrons are invited to self-check out books through a handwritten card catalogue system and a church volunteer spends a few hours each month making sure items are re-shelved correctly.

Adjacent to the gym in the Community Centre is a commercial sized kitchen where a group of volunteers gathers weekly to prepare a meal for a homeless shelter. The size of the cold storage refrigeration room rivals that found in most restaurants in the city. The kitchen is fully equipped and volunteers only need to bring the food, kept next to the years supply of frozen homemade cookies for funeral receptions. The group of ten volunteers comfortably spread out to various cooking and cleaning stations. Tina oversees the operation, with recipes in hand, ensuring everything runs smoothly and in the right proportions while preparing spaghetti for fifty men and some apple crisp for desert. The rest of the crew have signed up through the church website. Some volunteers are regulars, some are first timers interested in helping the homeless but also interested in meeting new people and feeling more connected to the congregation.

There is a rotation of local churches that take turns hosting the homeless men's shelter monthly, providing a warm, dry place to sleep at night and meals. When Central hosts, the men sleep together in the youth and children's meeting space, a large room with carpeted floors in the education wing. The men are usually able to arrive at the church at 7pm for the meal except on Wednesday nights when the youth group is using the room until 9pm. On these nights, the youth staff and volunteers do their best to shut things down, put away all the worship equipment, various flat screen televisions and video game consoles set up for the teenagers. They clear the carpet of dodge balls and other game equipment so the men can bring in their stuff sacks and sleeping bags for the night. The men have to be out of the building by 7am each morning so no homeless are present by the time pre-school starts. It is not an issue of space, the room is separate from where the pre-school meets, but a concern for safety and appearance as parents from the local community drop off their children in the morning.

The pre-school enrolls seventy, aged three to five years old, some attending all five mornings per week. Teachers and aids have a valet type drive-through drop off and pick up system due to the lack of adequate parking adjacent to the education building. Parents drive up, staff open the doors, unbuckle seat belts and booster seats and the children are taken by the hand to their age specific classroom. Each pre-school room is a purpose built, designated space, not used for any other church programs throughout the week. Teachers guide the children through a set curriculum focused on basic literacy, emotional learning and arithmetic.

Two floors above the preschool is the alternative high school. Founded by members of the church, it is staffed by licensed teachers from the community and run with students' special needs in mind. While taking state required courses, students are submitted into an onsite drug monitoring and rehab program and given ample opportunities for mentorship. This is their last chance at a diploma. If they dropped out of public high school and then the school district's alternative school program, they can come here.

The school once had a group of ten students and occupied a few converted classrooms in the education wing. After the remodel of this building the academy was given a portion of two floors purpose built for their use. By then the student body had expanded to fifty and a separate campus was meeting at a neighbouring church. None come to youth group, but youth staff are regularly invited to teach at the weekly chapel service. The church also purchased two houses across the street, designated as 'at risk' youth houses. Paid staff live onsite full time as house parents and qualified students from the academy with unsafe or under-housed backgrounds are given a roof, an education and caring adult supervision.

The church fully embraces the alternative high school. Congregants contribute donations and volunteer their time as tutors and mentors. It is always well received when students share stories of positive life change on stage during church services. City school district officials are also appreciative of the church's efforts. Neighbours, however, have complained. This includes church members with homes nearby. The flashpoint is the church's use of nearby homes for youth houses. Having church staff residing there is okay, but not high school dropouts, addicts and criminals. Neighbours are concerned about the impact on their home values, the safety of their neighbourhood and as one family with teenagers in the youth program bemoaned: "What about our daughters!" Despite signed letters to the city and several community meetings, the youth have been allowed to stay.

There are many more examples of the various groups and events co-existing at the church. Most are welcome so long as none dominate. Each group has opportunities to use facilities, funds and a platform to promote their activities to the wider congregation. But, each also experiences their own particular frustrations with the inherent limitations of being one among many at the church.

16 BEHIND THE SCENES

Every one of these programs is in some way linked to a member of church staff. Although, with few exceptions, staff members are rarely present at the activities themselves. The major exception is Sunday programs. Each of the eighty staff members has a part to play in the massive undertaking of hosting several thousand people of all ages in the building over a roughly five-hour span of time. During the week, depending on the role, significant hours are spent in the office and in meetings organizing people and prepping programs.

Interviewees consistently mentioned the significant role of staff in not only running the church, but in shaping theological norms. Pastors, as well as non-ordained department heads, are viewed by congregants as figures of authority. Shifts in the influence of Charismatic theology and praxis are often attributed to the staff member in charge. Staff are perceived as the ultimate decision makers and allocators of resources. They serve as models of the aspirations of the church through their own personal lives and conduct.

There is a consistent effort to foster unity among the staff, ensuring good communication in an organizational environment in which it is easy to focus on specialties and only those staff and church members relevant to one's programmatic role. The most dramatic example may be the youth department. Normal weekly youth meetings on Sundays and Wednesdays don't require youth staff to interact with children's staff, the worship and music department, congregational care nor the mission and service staff. Because they are providing a separate Sunday worship event for teenagers simultaneous with the main Sunday worship event, youth staff create their own volunteer base and utilize separate resources than those allocated for the main church services. This segregation dramatically impacted the Charismatic praxis that developed in the youth ministry, described in more detail below.

One strategy in maintaining unity is a weekly all staff meeting. Gathered in the purpose-built amphitheatre style choir room, the meeting starts with the senior pastor, Reverend Dale, highlighting exemplary stories that illustrate achievements on the five year plan and other relevant topics. At a particular 10am Tuesday meeting, Dale is focused on core traits he wants to see from the entire church staff.³⁵³ He stands next to

³⁵³ Excerpts in this section are from a journal recounting firsthand experiences while an associate pastor at Central Presbyterian between June 2004 – December 2011.

a whiteboard with four statements written on it from a recent executive team meeting. “First, is excellence,” Dale says while pointing to item number one. “Our goal is to do every task, whatever our role, at a high level. We all depend on each other to get our jobs done well. Like a rowing team, everyone has to paddle to get us to the finish the quickest. When we are all performing with excellence it benefits everyone around us.”

Number two is “doing the little things”. “Part of excellence is doing the behind the scenes small tasks no one notices without complaint or getting credit. This goes beyond each of our specific job responsibilities and involves helping out other staff members with their roles, particularly when they need a hand.” He highlights how the children’s department is currently displaced from their normal event space on Sunday mornings while the education wing of the church is being remodelled. They are hosting Sunday School programs at a neighbouring school requiring significant more logistical work for the already taxed children’s staff and volunteers. Dale gives an example of how Chris, the modern worship director, takes the church van and trailer up to the school after he is done leading Sunday services to help load all the children’s ministry supplies and bring them back to store at the church.

This example also illustrates the third core trait on the list: “serving others”. The focus is particularly on customer service. The customer, Dale explains, without using this specific label, are the attenders and members of the church. “We want to be like the Nordstrom of churches.” Nordstrom is a high-end department store known for meeting needs to ensure customer satisfaction. This includes an exceptional warranty and return policy. If there is ever a complaint or someone isn’t satisfied with a product, it can be returned for a full refund long after purchase. “For us this means paying close

attention to member feedback and concerns and making sure we are meeting people's needs with excellence."

Fourth on the list is "meeting agreed commitments". Dale's concern here is that "you do what you say you are going to do". "We all depend on each other getting our responsibilities done. If you commit to doing something and don't follow through, someone else has to pick up the slack."

He finishes his thoughts by addressing the 'elephant in the room' for many staff members: feeling overworked. "If you find you have too many demands on your schedule to meet your agreed commitments, talk with your supervisor to troubleshoot ways to adjust the amount of work or ways to improve efficiency. We are open to hearing if you have too much to do and want to help address this." By all indications Dale is genuine when he says this. However, the corporate culture of the church suggests a different story. This is evident in the second half of the meeting when each department head has a few minutes to highlight activities in their area of responsibility relevant to the whole staff. As each takes their turn, the focus, whether intentional or not, is on numbers: numbers of people coming to certain programs, numbers of hours worked, even numbers of dollars involved. Throughout there is a thread of talking about being busy. Busyness is a badge of honour of sorts. It is the indication that you are doing your job well and indirectly letting others know you don't have time to do anything else.

This same tone and theme is present at another cross-departmental meeting. The monthly pastor meeting proves a challenging hour. Being an ordained Minister of the Word and Sacrament usually involves having a significant role in leading a church. At Central power is delegated differently. The senior level executive team oversees all staff and programs, comprised of ordained and non-ordained positions based more on

the church's organizational structure. The executive team meets weekly with a clear agenda and mandate to run the church. Only four of the eight ordained pastors on staff are on this executive team. Also, the eight pastors rarely need to collaborate in their daily program and personnel responsibilities. As a result few issues or decisions are relevant to the whole group. Dale has often, behind closed doors, bemoaned this monthly meeting and the challenge of trying to find a purpose for it. He would rather keep it off his already overwhelming schedule. But, it has proven a significant morale boost for the ordained pastors who have a marginal role in running the church. Discussion at times will focus on organizing the "pastor on call" responsibilities – a role exclusive to ordained pastors. There is a phone number church members can call twenty four hours a day, seven days a week that rings to a pager we each take turns carrying in shifts for anyone who wants pastoral counsel on demand. Sometimes there is discussion about other dwindling roles designated exclusively for ordained pastors like baptisms or serving communion and Sunday service leadership.

One particular pastor meeting started with everyone doing a five minute 'check-in' sharing relevant issues or concerns that might shape the rest of the meeting.³⁵⁴ As each took their turn, the general theme was a mixture of exhaustion, complaint and a hint of cynicism related to the overwhelming demands on their time and lack of gratitude from those they serve. "I've had to be here every Saturday for the last two months," Daria shared bemoaning being one of the few pastors tasked with conducting the uptick in funerals. Dale rarely has to say anything as all are aware of his schedule. He only occasionally takes a day off to be with his family. At times Dale jokes that he has two savings accounts for his three young children: one for college and one for

³⁵⁴ Excerpts in this section are from a journal recounting firsthand experiences while an associate pastor at Central Presbyterian between June 2004 – December 2011.

counselling when they are older. For Steve it is managing the myriad of initiatives connected to ‘turning outward to show the community the real Jesus’. This has brought many more tasks to his already full plate. After all seven of the other pastors shared I was alarmed and concerned. I was accustomed to some complaining, but this meeting seemed exceptional. Coupled with the looks on my colleagues’ faces and their body language I was concerned about burn out. I clearly misread the situation. This was obvious when I attempted to make suggestions of ways we could, in the short term and gradually over time, delegate responsibilities normally tasked to pastors. What if we started having elders or church members take on some roles in worship event leadership and give Daria, if she had to work on a Saturday, a day off or at least out of the spotlight on a Sunday? What if we did less service projects, pacing the amount based on the amount of non-staff leaders available to promote, organize and oversee them? The reaction was swift and clear. “You may not want to do these things Greg, but it is why we are here. We are the congregation’s pastors and we need to lead them. We need to be visible on Sunday mornings, leading prayers, facilitating worship. We need to model serving in the community.” It was a reminder what they really needed was a place to vent, to be heard by others with similar struggles. There was no intention of change. Busyness was the norm and the measure of effectiveness.

Stress among staff at Central is a reflection of the wider culture of the affluent community the church serves. Busy lives are the norm as is the experience of social dislocation. A desire for relationship and connection to community is a key driver in people attending the church, but proves the hardest need to meet. Staff and pastors are known for not being relationally present or available. Efforts are constantly made to make people feel welcome. Greeters are at the door on a Sunday, ushers aid in directing people around the large church campus and a pastor stands at the door

shaking hands on the way out. As described in the five year 'roadmap,' congregants often do not move beyond surface level conversation about "news, weather and sports"³⁵⁵. Members who had been part of the church for years are on occasion greeted as if it was their first time attending. It is common in smaller gatherings to provide nametags to help people with the basics of introducing each other. It has proven difficult to overcome a lack of deep relationship, of being known at the church.

17 SUNDAYS AT CENTRAL

But, when it comes to programs and excellence in providing them, few compare to Central. The church has consistently spearheaded communitywide efforts for other churches in the city. The clearest example is the Jubilee Service Day -- a one day volunteer blitz in August focused on helping schools get ready for the start of the academic year, maintenance projects at local parks and at homes of people in need. The service day started just with Central, but has expanded to include over twenty-five other churches in the community. The event, on a Saturday each year, now culminates the next day in a citywide worship event. Participating churches move their Sunday services offsite meeting together at a park in the city centre.

On a more routine weekly basis, the professionalism of the church's programs is evident at the weekly Sunday worship event. Preaching and music pays the bills, just like some U.S. universities use the overwhelming popularity of American football to pay the expenses of all the other sports, or how a few key renowned scholars and programs drive student recruitment to pay for the less renowned academic faculty and programs. Sunday services, and the preaching and music in particular, drive tithing and donations to the church. The main Sunday services are the big show, the big leagues. Only a few get to preach, only the best get the first chair in the orchestra or band, the

³⁵⁵ 'Central Presbyterian' Church Roadmap document.

solo in the choir or microphone during the service. The majority of those running the services are paid professionals from the clergy to the musicians, as well as the local police officer onsite. A Sunday is never missed, regardless the weather or even major cultural events. With this comes pressure to perform at a high level on a weekly basis.

Sunday morning worship services are also the central hub of all the diverse programs, events and groups within the church. It is the only time in the week when (almost) everyone gathers together. Children and youth are segregated in separate spaces and throughout the day there are a five different worship services at different times. Each separate worship service has a unique culture, highlighted in more detail below. All attending hear the same sermon, the same community announcements and the same set of songs and hymns depending on whether in the sanctuary with organ and choir or in the community centre with the worship band.

The Sunday worship event, in many respects, begins well before Sunday morning through the detailed planning carried out among staff. Sermon themes, scripture selections, music and relevant liturgical elements are decided on months in advance. Preparation the week before includes music rehearsals for the choir and band, more detailed sermon review and coordinating any involvement from non-staff members, like ushers, prayer team volunteers, parking lot attendants or those being baptized. Each week, Dale, as the primary preacher, prepares a rough draft of his sermon and delivers it to a group of church members for feedback. He then crafts his final notes based on their reactions. Each Thursday, any staff involved in leading the worship events meet in a boardroom for a brief overview of each service. Focus is primarily on timing, making sure everyone knows the part they are to play and the transitions necessary to smoothly keep the worship event on schedule. The order of worship is timed to thirty-second increments. Occasionally Dale will ask for a few

more minutes than the standard eighteen reserved for his sermon and on the spot negotiations ensue to take that time from another element in the service.

By 8:45am each Sunday those tasked with the non-musical portion of the service meet in the vestry, a small room behind the stage. The choir is gathered in a separate room awaiting their cue to line up and process into the service. Musicians are all in place fine-tuning their instruments. Gradually the average 800 in attendance make their way from the parking lots through the lobby to receive an order of worship pamphlet that also highlights the various upcoming events and programs at the church. Some mingle, some immediately take their seats facing the stage and await the start of worship.

Back in the vestry, pastors at one time donned their robes and vestments. But after several years at the church Dale pushed to end this, arguing robes were a traditional relic that had lost meaning and significance in the current church culture. Instead time is spent chatting about personal events from the weekend, clarifying anything related to the service and making sure everyone who needs a cordless microphone is wired correctly. An elder or member of the prayer team is occasionally present making a list of any specific prayer requests from pastors. Once the organ prelude echoes through the halls, the pastors line up and head through a hallway behind the back of the stage and emerge near their throne like seats by the pulpit.

When the organist finishes the musical invocation, the preaching pastor takes his or her place at the front of the stage to offer a welcome and prayer – the main cue to all to be in their seats and quiet as the service is beginning.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁶ Sunday, August 6, 2017 - 9am worship service at Central Presbyterian.



“Welcome to Central Presbyterian. We’re so glad you are here with us this morning. As we gather to worship, this is a time to connect with a God who meets you wherever you are. You are free to worship as you feel comfortable. Let us pray.” Most, including the pastor, bow their heads and close their eyes. It is completely still and quiet throughout the sanctuary. “God we thank you we can gather together like this and pray you come lead this time. We bring you our gratitude and our praises for your glory. Amen.” Everyone looks up to hear the pastor invite them to, “stand and greet one another as we continue in worship together”. Usually the pastors seated on the stage walk through the first few rows shaking hands and saying hello. Congregants greet others immediately behind or in front of them.

After a minute the organist begins again, while the choir processes from the back of the sanctuary down the centre aisle to take their positions in the choir loft stage left. The choir director leads the congregation and choir in singing the hymn “To God be the Glory” with the words projected onto the large screen mounted behind the stage next to the thirty foot cross. At the last stanza, on cue, one of the other attending

pastors steps into the pulpit and leads the congregation in a liturgical prayer of confession. Congregants read the prayer together projected on the screen behind the pulpit. The pastor finishes with a prepared word of assurance of forgiveness. The service continues with more music. The choir stands to sing “When There’s Love at Home” followed by the congregation joining the choir in singing the hymn, “Lord, Whose Love through Humble Service”. Another officiate stands to read the scripture text for the sermon while the passage from Luke 16:1-12 is projected on the screen. The preaching pastor then grabs a specially designed wooden music stand to hold his notes and stands at centre stage away from the pulpit to begin the sermon.

Each week, regardless of who preaches, the pastor prays, begins with an anecdotal story and shares an eighteen minute homily crafted around a select passage of scripture. Historical-critical methods of exegesis are featured in the biblical interpretation as the pastor describes the original context of the passage and what in this case Jesus was referring to when he shared this parable of the ‘prodigal manager’ to his original audience. Then, parallels are carefully made to connect the historical text with contemporary life. While there will be no ‘altar call’ or other opportunity to physically respond to the proclamation of “God’s word to us,” the sermon will invite practical, personal life application. The assumption is the text is relevant to the congregation gathered and the preaching pastor’s job, through prior training and partnership with the Spirit, is to help congregants hear God’s spoken word to them in their particular situations.

The liturgy of the service then shifts to “Our Response” to “God’s Word” through corporate singing of a rendition of “Amazing Grace”. The other pastor officiating takes the stage stating, “we continue our worship through the giving of our tithes and offerings”. The ushers have already come forward with offering plates in

hand and all bow their heads as the pastor prays for the use of the donations. A soloist from the choir, accompanied by a pianist sings “Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy” while the ushers aid in passing the offering plates up and down the pews. Donations are then taken back to a designated office under police escort and placed in a large safe for the accounting department to tally and bank deposit on Monday.

After one more hymn, a pastor steps forward with hands raised and offers a brief benediction, the cue the service has concluded. The organist begins the postlude while the pastor walks up the centre aisle and takes his place at the exit to shake congregants’ hands as they move from the sanctuary to the lobby. Some congregants stay and mingle, most make their way to their cars, picking up their children from respective Sunday school classrooms on the way.

On the other side of the entrance lobby, in the Community Centre, a similar order of worship is unfolding, but in a very different style.³⁵⁷ The “worship band” comprised of a drummer, base guitarist, lead guitarist, several vocalist and the worship leader with microphone and guitar are on stage. They play an opening worship chorus with words projected on a large screen behind them. The pastor leading the service stands to welcome congregants, highlight important announcements and pray. The bandleader takes over leadership, “Feel free to worship however you feel led this morning.” The guitarists are already playing the first notes of the next song softly in the background. “God is near and loves to hear your praises. You can stand, sit, raise your hands, whatever allows you to put your full attention on God as we sing this morning.” He then, shifts his words to prayer, directly addressing the divine, while the music is growing in volume and tempo behind him, “God we come to worship you and you alone. We thank you that you are here with us and hear our prayers. Come and

³⁵⁷ Sunday, August 6, 2017 – 9:45am ‘modern’ worship service.

meet with each of us.” He steps back from the microphone and starts playing his own guitar while nodding a cue to the drummer. The full band starts playing as the vocalists lead the congregation in “Come though Fount of Every Blessing,” an eighteenth century hymn by Robinson, adapted more recently by contemporary praise bands like the David Crowder Band. It is the start of a four-song set including covers of Christian artists like Chris Tomlin and Bethel Church worship. They are the same songs sung at many Charismatic church services around the world.

Between the second and third song the bandleader initiates a prayer of confession, giving the congregation time to share, through silent prayer, their sins privately with God before starting the third song. “God we thank you for your sacrifice, mercy and forgiveness. You make all things new and we receive your forgiveness now in Jesus’ name.” The worship music set continues to ebb and flow in intensity and tempo.

The preaching pastor then stands at the end of the set, transitioning with a prayer, while the instrumentalists still play in the background. “God open our ears to hear you and speak to us through your Word. Amen.”



The house lights brighten slightly. The band steps off the stage, the cue for the congregation to take their seats. The preacher is standing just below the stage, on a slightly elevated platform with a metal music stand in front of him holding his notes. He begins the same sermon delivered at the prior service in the sanctuary, just with a slight change in attire. He is no longer in a blazer and not wearing a tie. After his eighteen minutes of allotted teaching time, he signals the conclusion of the sermon with a prayer as the worship band returns to the stage.

The band leader announces the giving of tithes and offerings, “If you are here for the first time, you are our guest, and just let the basket pass. The rest of us, we give as an act of worship.” Ushers stand at the end of the aisles of folding chairs to facilitate the passing of baskets before taking them under police escort to the safe in the back offices. The band plays one last song as an offertory. They then briefly pause for the bandleader or another officiate to share a farewell benediction that usually incorporates something from the theme of the sermon. The band continues to play one more instrumental stanza from the prior song as the congregation begins to file out to the parking lot. Some linger in the back of the room and as the band stops they are able to have conversations without yelling over the background noise. Around them, preparations are being made to ready the room for the next service about to start in fifteen minutes. Parents head to the education wing to retrieve their children. Very few walk across to the lobby as it is already full of people attending the next service in the sanctuary.

Up the stairwell from the church lobby a different scene is unfolding simultaneous with the worship events in the sanctuary and Community Centre. The Childcare Centre hosts children five years old and under, providing a supervised play space while their parents attend the church service. Parents are able to ‘check-in’

through touch screens to register their child, print off a sticker label with name and vital information they place on their child and a pick up slip. Those with nursing infants have a reserved seating area in the balcony of the sanctuary. It is a darkened soundproof room with rocking chairs where they can view the service and hear piped in audio with a volume control.

Out the door and across the pre-school playground there is a steady stream of primary school age families dropping their kids off. Each checks in at touch screen registration kiosks, apply the appropriate nametags and labels and head to age specific Sunday school rooms in the education wing. Adult volunteers lead groups of children through a guided Sunday school curriculum while their parents attend the main service.

18 REFORMED CHARISMATIC YOUTH MINISTRY

The youth ministry, focused on teenagers, takes age specific church programming to another level. They function like a church within a church. Teens can be actively involved in the youth ministry on Sunday mornings, Wednesday nights, in a small group that meets an additional time during the week and attend a myriad of other events and activities without ever being involved in any of the main Sunday worship events or church programs. The youth program has its own mission trips, taking youth on day to weeklong community service oriented activities. For a time this included a 125 person trip to Tijuana, Mexico to build eight homes for families in need. The youth group also invites teenagers to participate in a weeklong summer camp, driving them across state lines for five days of river rafting and fireside sermons and worship music.

This creates many opportunities for the youth group to cultivate its own norms—which it did over time under my leadership. As a result, the youth ministry became an important example of Reformed Charismatic theology and praxis at Central.

The program was designed to create fun events teens voluntarily wanted to attend for religious education, mentorship and relationship with peers built around spiritual connection. Youth group gatherings were often high energy, incorporating games, relational interaction and a time set aside for teaching about relevant, life application oriented Christian principles. Nothing about these basic norms changed under my leadership. What did change was the content of the religious teaching and expectations for religious experience. Charismatic theology emphasizing God's presence and power became more prevalent. Praxis exposed teenagers to what was interpreted as tangible experience of God. Youth were encouraged to listen for God's voice in normal life and taught practices to cultivate this. Worship through music, similar to the modern worship band in the Community Centre, became a normal element of youth meetings. Adult youth leaders were trained in prayer practices like listening and prophetic prayer and invited to pray for youth.

While away from the church on weekend trips or weeklong camps we experimented with multiple forms of Charismatic prayer practices.³⁵⁸ Sitting around the campfire with sixty teenagers after a day rafting on the river, intermixed with the worship music or during the teaching time, adult volunteer leaders and certain teenagers in leadership shared "impressions" or "words of knowledge". "Someone here has shoulder pain from a sports injury." If that accurately described anyone they had the opportunity to identify themselves and receive prayer. "Someone is struggling with tension in their family, with your parents regularly fighting. God wants you to know he is with you and knows the pain and frustration you are feeling." Often the messages or impressions were shared privately rather than in large communal settings.

³⁵⁸ Excerpts in this section are from a journal recounting firsthand experiences while an associate pastor at Central Presbyterian between June 2004 – December 2011.

It was more common to invite youth to receive prayer after the teaching time, rather than stand visibly upfront while everyone was required to be in attendance. Those who didn't want to stay for prayer could spend time with friends in an adjacent room or area. Lines would often form and leaders walked down the lines laying hands on and praying for each student. Some would experience physical manifestations, fall down, shake or what they interpreted as visions or spiritual insights. We also started having two leaders pray together prophetically for one student at a time, listening for God's specific message to them and writing it down. This type of prayer logistically required more time with each recipient and youth waited hours for a turn. Some, years later, pulled out of their wallets or still had hung in their bedrooms scraps of lined paper used to record the messages heard during the prayer.

On the annual service trip to Tijuana, Mexico, after building houses during the day, we gathered the one hundred teenagers and twenty-five adults together in a large area of the orphanage we called home for the week. Like other youth group meetings the event included worship music, some upfront games and a sermon. This particular week I invited my friend Derrick from an African American church in the Pentecostal tradition to do the teaching. I asked him to freely teach in the style he felt most comfortable – a mix of social and personal prophetic. He shared a message of self-sacrificial advocacy for marginalized groups. He also boldly shared direct messages he believed were from God with significant emotional energy.

Throughout, the youth and adult leaders listened attentively, but were not responsive in any notable way, not even the occasional head knob of agreement. I could tell my friend was growing concerned these were blank stares and his message was falling flat despite the energy he was putting into delivering it. At one point he switched from preaching to prophesy, identifying specific youth and inviting them to

come forward so he could share a personal ‘divine’ message with them. The suspense was palpable in the room when he picked out Richard. Most of us knew Richard, his struggles with alcohol, discipline at school and I personally knew his family having been to their home multiple times providing pastoral support to his single mom and two brothers. My friend had never met him. “God knows the pain you have been through with your family. He wants to be like a father to you – a father you have never had. The anger you feel is justified, but has now consumed you and it is time to let it go.” Richard stood there stoic, occasionally nodding his head. I could see other youth watching with jaw dropped expressions in their eyes. But for my friend, the lack of expressive, emotional response he was accustomed to in his church community back home was starting to unnerve him. Richard went back to his seat and Derrick came over to me and whispered in my ear “I don’t think they are feeling it Greg. I probably should just wrap this up.” My read of the room was just the opposite. I saw a group of Presbyterians on the edge of their seats. No matter how engaged they were you will not hear an “Amen,” “preach preacher,” “that’s right” called out from the congregation. You may be able to get some laughs and nods, otherwise your delivery is good and message resonating if they are actually still listening and not talking to others around them. You could hear a pin drop in the room that night. But, just to be sure and to reassure my friend, I took the microphone. “Our amazing cooks have made dessert downstairs and it is all ready for you: platters full of fudge brownies. You are free to go down there now if you’d like. If you want to stay in here you can as well. Derrick is going to continue prophesying and then we are going to do a prayer tunnel.” A few adult leaders opened the doors in the back and I sat down with Derrick for a moment just to give anyone a chance to go if they wanted. No one moved. All 125 people stayed in their seats. I looked over at Derrick, he nodded in acknowledgement with a

smile on his face, took the microphone and continued identifying specific youth to pray for.

As dramatic as some of our Charismatic praxis had become in the youth ministry, especially compared to the wider congregation at Central, we were still Reformed Charismatics. This wasn't the Pentecostal youth group culture my friend was used to or expecting. We always walked a line of being open to spiritual experience, but still in ways that fit theological norms.

At times we would push past real or perceived norms, but I was always very cautious. On a Saturday night of a different youth retreat, I was leading the teaching time in the evening. We were at a Christian conference centre with sixty youth and adult leaders. After twenty minutes of teaching, I felt I needed to pray, but in a way I wasn't comfortable. I was hesitant, not because of my own theology or preferences, but because of how my prayers could be perceived by the youth and adult leaders. I didn't want to scare or offend or create the impression you had to do certain rituals in certain ways to experience divine activity. I checked with my wife and another staff member standing close by, "I feel like I need to shoot them with the Holy Spirit." I really didn't have another way to describe it. I was feeling energy pulsing through my body in bursts and it felt like this energy was trying to move through and out of me on the youth there that night. No doubt I was influenced by what I had seen in various Charismatic churches I visited in the past. Some in these Charismatic churches prayed like their hands and arms were loaded guns and they enacted a ritual as if shooting prayer recipients. I had participated in these other churches' theological praxis while attending conferences and trainings and used their frameworks to inform my interpretation of what I was experiencing. My wife and colleague could tell what I was asking. I wasn't comfortable doing it and I needed them to discern with me and

provide two kinds of feedback: Did they think this was God? And did they think the youth group could handle it? Neither of them seemed as concerned as I was.

“Absolutely, go for it.” So I did, carefully. While it appeared positive and dramatic within the context of the prayer rituals of other churches, I was not confident in my ability to replicate this in a safe and edifying way among those gathered in front of me. “I’m going to pray for you guys from up here. You just pay attention to God, not me, and look and listen for what God wants to show you.” The best word I could find in my vocabulary to fit what I was feeling was “boom”. I almost whispered it at first, but then with growing confidence spoke it louder into the microphone, “boom, boom, boom”. I was looking around the room while saying this. Youth were standing, most with their eyes closed. Some had arms raised like they were going to receive a hug or someone was going to hand them a large box. I could see a few watching me from the sides and back of the room with expressions that I interpreted as puzzled, perhaps feeling awkward by the abnormal form of prayer they were witnessing. After several minutes we invited students who wanted to stay and receive more prayer to line up and adult leaders prayed for them individually. Others could head to another room to spend time together, play board games and have milk and cookies.

It was always hard to tell what people were experiencing or how they were interpreting their experience. We rarely directly asked prayer recipients to tell us that night and on other occasions, but eventually we would hear youth and adults reflect on those times. Occasionally, some would express concerns or confusion about what was happening, but there were rarely major complaints overtly expressed.

Each month the church mailed to all members a thirty-page colour publication highlighting events and activities at the church. The youth department had an allotted two pages to fill. After this retreat, youth staff wanted a student to share stories from

the weekend. The teen asked ended up focusing her 500-word article specifically on her experience during my prayers. “I have been struggling with my parents fighting and worried they were going to get a divorce. It was really heavy on my heart that night and I felt held down by the stress of what was going to happen to my family, to my sister and I. I kept trying to talk to God about it, but couldn’t seem to get anywhere. Then Greg started saying ‘boom, boom, boom’ on the microphone. Every time he said ‘boom’ it was like something broke off of me. It was like there were chains holding me down and they were being snapped or shot off. I felt a re-assurance that God was with me and no matter what happened, that was not going to change. I was also able to forgive my parents and my anger went away.”

I had a chance to read the article before it was sent to the communications department for final editing and inclusion in the publication. I cringed anticipating the reaction. “I don’t think this is going to be accepted,” I warned my staff. “You can submit it, but prepare for them to ask for a different article.” Youth staff members were uncomfortable with the idea of editing or hiding the teenager’s story. It struck a nerve as unfair and not empowering or authentic to our youth and their experience. All of us were well aware of the differences between what we did in youth group and the rest of the church. But, the youth staff hadn’t spent as much time as I in all the various meetings, theological debates and discussions about issues surrounding Charismatic theology and praxis. Cultural boundary lines were not always apparent to an outsider, but I could intuitively feel them. Having something in an all-church publication that suggested the ordained Presbyterian youth pastor was shooting teenagers with the Holy Spirit was going to be more trouble for church leadership, and myself, than it was worth.

The article was submitted by the youth staff without revision, flagged by the communications staff and ended up in the hands of the pastors on the executive team. They talked to me about it, sensitive to concerns about suppressing a teenager's story, but had already offered suggested edits. In short, they took out any reference to how I prayed—no more “boom, boom, boom” and no more language of shooting the Holy Spirit. Their hope was to put emphasis on the positive experience of the teenager, while omitting details of the prayer ritual I was enacting in the room that night. As one pastor tried to frame it “it sounds like you had to be there to appreciate and get it”. Their concern was that the general reader of the publication wouldn't get it. This could all be avoided with a little editing and better messaging.

That said, none of the pastors confronted me and expressed concern about that night. They never told me I shouldn't do it again—at least not directly. Instead it was an affirmation of what I had consistently experienced: Charismatic theology and praxis was allowed so long as it was on the margins and ideally hidden from view. The youth ministry by nature of its very existence and programs was already hidden from view from the mainstream church. In many ways this reflected the developmental stage of the youth themselves as they individuated from their families and questioned and pushed back against the norms around them. So, it proved an interesting pairing to add Charismatic theology and praxis to the mix. As already noted, the youth ministry was like an independent Reformed Charismatic congregation. All was well so long as we basically kept to ourselves, not seeking to shift wider church norms to our preferences. We were given autonomy and freedom to experiment with these alternative forms of spirituality so long as it proved safe and healthy for the youth and their families.

However, I was burdened by what I felt was a lack of sustainability. While grateful for measured permission, I was concerned whether it was ultimately best for

the youth. The children's ministry was not teaching the same spirituality. It was a disorienting process when a new group would graduate from primary age church programs into the youth department. Also, even more significantly, their parents were not exposed to the same spirituality in their involvement in the wider church. I was aware some teenagers edited accounts of their experiences at youth group when talking with their parents, much like I did when interacting with the wider church. I was also aware not all the youth or volunteer leaders were comfortable with the increasing amount of Charismatic praxis in the youth ministry.

For years I waited and watched and at times tried to push for at least some adjustment to wider church norms so the youth group was not so unique and out of sync. The consultant led, five year planning meeting recounted above was just such a situation. Ultimately I concluded the majority theology and praxis of the congregation wasn't going to significantly change. In all likelihood, when the time came for me to leave my position, the youth group would revert back to align more with wider church praxis.

Although it took several years, this is what happened. Someone on my youth staff I trained initially took over. He changed things so the Charismatic praxis was more contemplative like the Reformed Charismatics in the rest of the church. But when he left his position and new leadership was brought in, the youth ministry returned to the way it was prior to my tenure.

At the time I likened wider theological norms to a river. I always felt as though I was swimming up stream, against the current. I was never kicked out of the river and forced to watch from the shore. But, when in the water, if I relaxed I was carried with the current. At times the river seemed wide and it was easier to swim upstream. There was general acceptance of teaching emphasizing personal relationship with Jesus. But

other times, it felt the river narrowed and I was attempting to swim up rocky rapids. It was difficult when religious experience included physical manifestations or claims of personal, prophetic revelation. I could look behind or beside me and see others swimming around me, some drafting off of my efforts. But, when I left the position those not able to swim on their own strength adjusted back to the flow of majority theological norms. On the whole, swimming against the current required expending significant energy for only small gains that often seemed temporary and tenuous. All be it exhausting, being the minority theologically also fostered perseverance rather than complacency cultivated through resistance training. In the end, I was more assured in my theology and praxis, but weary from the powerful influence of congregational norms.

19 UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Navigating theological disagreements is particularly challenging due to uncertainty about when, where and what form of Charismatic theology and praxis was acceptable. It is important to emphasize how fluid the experience of being Reformed Charismatic is at Central. It goes beyond navigating the different perspectives and experiences of a diverse and only loosely connected Reformed Charismatic subgroup. Central Presbyterian is a large congregation with different theological perspectives. Reverend Dale, in particular, walked a tight rope trying to maintain unity in the midst of diversity. His approach required a leadership style of compromise and reconciliation. Charismatic theology and praxis had the potential to divide congregations and Dale was adamant this would not happen. As a result, being a Reformed Charismatic required cultivating a sixth sense of intuitively reading each situation and context and adapting to the extent one was willing to risk tension or controversy.

Even familiar venues, with fairly clear norms, had unexpected moments when Charismatic theology and praxis was welcome. An international missionary back home from the field was invited to preach at the Sunday worship services.³⁵⁹ Mark had recently survived a motorcycle accident that shattered portions of his spine. The initial prognosis was paralysis from the waist down. He defied these projections and recovered substantial mobility. By his return to the church that loved and knew him, he was able to stand in the pulpit on his own strength. He still had visible and substantial limitations, but many were inspired by the extent of his recovery. Mark was not. He wanted total restoration and was eager to receive prayer for physical healing.

While in the vestry before the start of the service, as pastors gathered to check microphones and review transitions, Mark asked me for prayer. The organist had just begun the prelude, signalling the pastors and officiates needed to make their way to the stage. Reverend Dale, breaking protocol, told us to take as much time as we needed to pray for Mark. He would go out and cover any of the necessary elements of the service until we joined him. For a church that highly valued well-orchestrated Sunday services, timed to thirty-second increments and tight transitions, this was a significant compromise. Dale was overtly affirming Charismatic spirituality. He too wanted Mark to receive prayer, not just to fulfil Mark's desires, but to see healing up close – something Dale had yet to witness.

However, Dale did not make room for a moment like this on stage. In another congregation, a prayer for healing for Mark would naturally fit in the planned order of service and been expected. At Central, Dale had to walk the tension of trying to hold different theological perspectives, and preferences related to praxis, together. This

³⁵⁹ Excerpts in this section are from a journal recounting firsthand experiences while an associate pastor at Central Presbyterian between June 2004 – December 2011.

tension increased dramatically during worship rituals on Sundays. Thus, he was willing to adjust for healing prayer behind the scenes, but not risk offending or confusing congregants by doing it corporately.

For a season, Reverend Dale, the modern worship bandleader Chris, and I met for weekly prayer sessions. These prayer meetings occasionally involved speaking in tongues, often involved physical manifestations and always happened late in the evening on Monday nights at the church. At first we met in Dale's office. But, because a few other staff members were occasionally outside in the halls, Dale moved the prayer sessions into the bowels of the church. In the vestry we were not only out of sight, but surrounded by multi-layered thick walls of concrete. No one could see the senior pastor on the floor experiencing a strong, weighty physical feeling that came over him while we prayed. No one could hear the peculiarities of our style of prayer.

Although Dale personally experienced Charismatic spirituality and trusts Reformed Charismatics in his congregation, he is concerned about suggesting Charismatic praxis needs to be normative for the wider church. There is too much disagreement and too much potential for abuse with religious experience. Dale personally relates to both Reformed Charismatics and Reformed Cessationists. He is also well aware of the disproportionate influence of his role as the senior leader. Thus, he tries to hold to a middle ground both personally and with his public persona.

However, even during the predictability of worship rituals on Sundays there are still surprising occasions when Charismatic theology and praxis is welcome. My head was bowed in prayer so I didn't notice at first Sam, the music and choir director, walking over to me. I just finished my sermon and we were moving on to other elements in the order of service. I taught on some of the practicalities of hearing God's voice. The other officiate was now praying for tithes and offerings. Sam always

stayed on the opposite side of the stage leading the choir and musicians. But I looked up to find him whispering in my ear that there were five minutes extra in the service and after the next hymn he wanted me to lead the congregation in a listening prayer exercise.

To put this in perspective, Sam was the one who drove the efficiency of the Sunday services. He designed each service, organizing the elements and timing. He was known for keeping things on track and limiting improvisation. There were so many moving parts in a typical service in the sanctuary, literally over a hundred people had to adjust to spontaneous alterations in the planned order. Even more people would be affected in a domino effect if the service ran longer than the allotted time.

At first I was confused by what he was asking, thrown by how much it broke from norms. Then I was puzzled and nervous how to practically do it. I had exactly two and half minutes to sort it out, the time allotted for the next hymn. My mind was immediately flooded by myriad of issues. How much time did I really have to lead the prayer exercise? What would be the least offensive, while still actually providing a taste of Charismatic praxis? I needed to find a middle ground approach. It didn't even occur to me to be authentic with my own way of hearing God's voice. Nor was I going to lead in ways common with the youth group.

The hymn concluded and I walked to the centre of the stage. Regulars knew at this point I should be doing a brief benediction, ending the service. As succinctly as possible I summarized the change of plans, signalling what they could expect. "We are going to take just a moment to do what I was just talking about. We are going to briefly listen for God to speak to us. Stay comfortably where you are seated and be open to God being near, right where you are. Focus your attention on God and see what he may want to say to you or show you." I closed my eyes and slightly bowed

my head to model what they could do. This was not the physical posture I normally prayed. I said a brief prayer, “God speak to us now in ways we can each hear you.” Then, I allowed for a period of silence. I was conscious of the clock ticking. I was thinking about all the potential confusion this exercise in prayer may cause. Then, I encouraged them to silently dialogue with God about what he may be showing them or speaking to them about. This was followed by more silence. Silence like this wasn’t the norm in the service – especially a prolonged silence. I briefly looked over at Sam attempting to make eye contact and get a nonverbal cue on timing. His eyes were closed and he was fully participating in the prayer exercise. “Keep your attention on God and relax as much as possible, trusting him to talk to you.” I looked out at the congregation, roughly half of the 800 had their eyes closed and appeared to be participating. The others were looking around in a way I perceived as waiting for the service to conclude. Searching for options within congregational norms, I wrapped up the time with a concluding prayer. “God, thank you that you are near and speak to us. Help us hear you more and more. Amen.” With that cue, everyone knew the exercise had concluded. Sam was back on his feet preparing to lead the musicians in the postlude and I delivered a benediction incorporating encouragement to keep listening for God’s voice at home and in everyday life.

It is notable I experienced this much stress in what by all accounts seemed an innocuous, non-event. A brief improvised prayer that naturally fit with the sermon would go unnoticed in some ecclesial contexts, a basic norm in the worship rituals of the congregation. At Central, leading this exercise required attention to many different factors and interpretive grids, and managing risk of conflict and offense. Spontaneity is rare, but as demonstrated by this example, always a possibility. Improvisation incorporating Charismatic praxis even more unexpected, but still an ever present

possibility in the fluid, even uncertain, experience of being a Reformed Charismatic at Central Presbyterian.

20 CONCLUSION

Reverend Dale and Central want room for Charismatic spirituality. Sometimes this literally looks like a room. While this room or closet is not relegated exclusively to the privacy of people's homes, it is not going to expand into every room of the church. It is not going to be the new norm for the majority. Instead it is a case by case, ad hoc, almost intuitive vetting process of when the door of the room is opened and Charismatic spirituality is integrated into other settings and times. As such, the church has never developed corporate statements or precise guidelines to navigate when and in what forms Charismatic spirituality is welcome. Nor are there clear rules or norms guiding what is allowed to occur in the rooms like the youth ministry, inner healing prayer teams and anointing prayer at the church. Boundary lines exist, norms are present, some negotiable, others not. Much, as described, depends on context, leadership present and unexpected moments of inclusion.

The next two chapters focus on these differing theological perspectives and experiences. Individual Reformed Charismatic accounts are put in dialogue with each other, with theologians addressing debates relevant to Reformed Charismatics and with social scientists studying them or those similar. Effort is made to describe in more detail the distinctions between Reformed and Pentecostal-Charismatic theology, praxis and norms, all while rooting these issues in the lived theology of Reformed Charismatics themselves.

Chapter 5: Pentecostal-Charismatic Theology and Reformed Theology

Despite all the complex diversity *within* Reformed and Pentecostal-Charismatic theology they are distinct traditions. As described at Central Presbyterian, clashes over praxis cause real tension and challenges in the lives of individuals and communities seeking to blend them. In order to appreciate this, or more specifically to analyse it, some clarity must be offered about the theological differences between the Reformed and the Pentecostal-Charismatic traditions broadly. The more this theological identification expands beyond doctrinal debates to acknowledge the lived experience of Reformed Charismatics, the better. In what follows, scholars, practitioners and ordinary Reformed Charismatic theologians are put in dialogue around key theological debates.

This chapter begins, primarily through the work of JKA Smith, with an effort to describe Pentecostal theology and praxis. Smith is chosen because his summative, albeit overgeneralized, characterizations of Pentecostal spirituality capture many of the key observations of other Pentecostal scholars studying historical periods and global contexts. This section is meant to concisely summarize perspectives highlighted in the literature review of chapter two as well as elaborate on central issues identified through ethnography at Central Presbyterian in chapter four.

Next, theological description is offered of the Reformed tradition, but by a different route, mainly by exploring Reformed critique of Pentecostalism. Multiple Reformed scholars are chosen to highlight the diversity of perspectives related to the Pentecostal tradition and focus on key points of contention. Theological debates are grounded in the lived experience of Reformed Charismatics by putting scholars in dialogue with ordinary theologians, per the primary analytical method of this project.

Ordinary Reformed Charismatic voices are from interviews with members of Central Presbyterian, adding further detail to the account in the prior chapter. While focus is on theological analysis, the dialogue demonstrates a key issue explored in the methodology chapter: the limitations of theological debate to address conflicts over praxis and everyday lived experience.

21 CHARISMATIC THEOLOGY

James KA Smith has identified five key characteristics he argues are shared across global contexts³⁶⁰ and the diversity within the Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition. Again, these five characteristics provide a helpful synopsis of other scholars' observations noted in the literature review of chapter two.

21.1 “Radical Openness to God”

Pentecostal spirituality emphasizes an expectancy that God is near and active, capable of surprising and new divine action. “The unexpected is expected.”³⁶¹ Room is made in prayer, corporate worship settings and daily life for God to act. This includes ways that are unprecedented, requiring an open and flexible interpretive paradigm to discern divine activity. He contrasts this with what he frames as modernistic worldviews rooted in naturalism and technology or traditional doctrines which may be dismissive of Pentecostal definitions of divine activity.

As such, Pentecostal praxis is organized around the continuing activity of the Holy Spirit. It is expected God will speak through people, circumstances, events and rituals. Christians are empowered to receive and interpret divine revelation and participate in divine power and activity. There are diverse views regarding whom God

³⁶⁰ James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues : Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2010), 11–12.

³⁶¹ Smith, 33.

will choose to move through and how, accurate discernment and interpretation, as well as explanations as to the absence of divine activity. However, spontaneous human response to unexpected divine activity is normalized.

Smith may be critiqued for idealizing Pentecostal spirituality in this regard. Needs within a group for common understanding tend towards uniformity in what the ‘unexpected’ looks like. Institutionalization and routinization is not necessarily a negative, threatening process, but rather normalizing. However, on the whole, to Smith’s point, while Reformed praxis embraces order, predictability and consistency, Pentecostals may actively work against such tendencies.

21.2 An ‘Enchanted’ Theology of Creation and Culture³⁶²

God is seen as present and powerful. With divine immanence and activity as an operative theological paradigm, Pentecostals see the natural world and human culture as infused with spiritual beings and activity. This ‘spiritual realm’ is distinct but intricately involved in concrete, historical space and time.

While there is a diversity of views as to how to discern, interpret and influence this spiritual realm, there is common agreement over a battle of opposing forces. Angels, demons, principalities and powers either align with or counter divine will and activity. Humans and the natural world are impacted and often the spoils of the spiritual battle. Humans to varying degrees can influence events and outcomes through their participation in activities such as intercessory prayer or deliverance and their resistance to temptations through alignment with God’s will.

³⁶² Smith, 39–40.

21.3 “Non-dualistic Affirmation of Embodiment and Materiality”³⁶³

Openness to divine activity and the immanence of a spiritual realm includes expectation of transformation of the material and circumstantial. This is often framed eschatologically as heaven coming to earth as opposed to a soteriology dominated by escaping earth to go to a post-mortem heavenly bliss. Pentecostals expect healing, prosperity and wholeness now. While there is diversity as to the extent and what specific forms this takes, there is general agreement it is part of establishing the goodness of God’s kingdom concretely in time and space. “Deliverance and liberation, then are not just ‘spiritual’; the gospel is not just a tonic for souls.”³⁶⁴ In this way, per Smith, Pentecostal theology is non-dualistic, affirming creation, bodies and materiality. Again there is an idealistic or purist tendency here which Smith acknowledges, discussed more below in Smith’s fifth characteristic.

21.4 “An Affective, Narrative Epistemology”³⁶⁵

Smith sees in Pentecostal praxis a contrast with what he frames as rationalistic evangelical theology. This is most evident in Pentecostal emphasis on experience and the value of testimony. For Smith, Pentecostalism has a unique epistemology. “Knowledge is rooted in the heart and traffics in the stuff of story.”³⁶⁶ Humans know through “affective, narrative epistemic practice”³⁶⁷. Smith critiques evangelical theology for over rational worship that elevates a didactic sermon, framing relationship with God as primarily through the mind and “talking head” praxis.³⁶⁸ Pentecostalism,

³⁶³ Smith, 41.

³⁶⁴ Smith, 41.

³⁶⁵ Smith, 43.

³⁶⁶ Smith, 43.

³⁶⁷ Smith, 43.

³⁶⁸ Smith, 43.

in contrast, emphasizes not so much anti-intellectualism, but a critique of reductionism that views experiential, affective knowledge with scepticism.³⁶⁹

Pentecostalism has embraced key epistemological elements of postmodernism. Subjective, perspectival, practical experience is given authority. Efforts to offer objective, dispassionate theology are viewed as irrelevant unless lived out. Authority comes not through well-reasoned and informed arguments, but compelling oration rooted in practical wisdom and tangible demonstration. Typically in Reformed praxis the person presenting the sermon or testimony is qualified by educational pedigree and grasp of theology or biblical exegesis. In Pentecostal norms more significant than one's level of education is whether one has healed the sick, cast out demons, and seen and heard God personally in practical ways.

Central to Smith's argument is contrasting Pentecostal use of story versus a theological method he associates with evangelical theology, rooted in right thinking and affirmation of propositional beliefs. When Pentecostals, Smith argues, interpret events and experiences, rather than just providing facts, they place events in an unfolding, eschatological plot. Faith is not marked by:

a constellation of ideas, a set of beliefs, or a collection of doctrines; rather, their salvation depended on affectively and imaginatively absorbing a story—and seeing themselves in that story.³⁷⁰

Smith argues this is a more holistic understanding of human knowledge and spiritual formation:

Thus Pentecostal worship digs down past and through the cognitive, conscious, and deliberative register to the affective and emotional core of our identity—a noncognitive core that directs much more of our action and behavior than we'd like to admit.³⁷¹

³⁶⁹ Smith, 53.

³⁷⁰ Smith, 69–70.

³⁷¹ Smith, 76–77.

Rather than seeing Pentecostalism as escapist or manipulative emotionalism, Smith argues Pentecostal forms of spirituality shape and mature emotions. Pentecostalism, per Smith, recognizes that human understanding and praxis are primarily operating at a pre-cognitive, subconscious level accessed best by affective, experiential approaches to faith formation.

if our emotions construe the world *before* and more often than our intellectual, cognitive perceptions, then the shape of our emotions *makes* our world most of the time—in which case, discipleship would be more a matter of training our emotions than of changing our minds³⁷²

With this line of argument Smith offers an apologetic for the experientialism and emotionalism prevalent in Pentecostal praxis, often viewed with scepticism by critics of Pentecostal spirituality:

The tangible, visceral, emotional nature of Pentecostal spirituality works as a pedagogy of the affects, an education of the emotions, priming disciples to precognitively construe the world of their experience in a certain way *outside* of worship. In other words, in its best moments, the emotional fervor of Pentecostal worship is not an escape from the “realities” of a cruel world, nor is it merely a quise-narcissistic immersion in an emotional “high.” Rather, what’s going on in the affectivity of Pentecostal worship is emotion training that amounts to construal training—it is the inculcation of a preconscious hermeneutic, shaping and forming our “concern-based construals.”³⁷³

It is debatable whether the myriad of Pentecostal worshippers in various contexts understand their praxis in this way. But for Smith this all points to awareness of important precognitive interpretive frameworks. Pentecostal worship is like film in its narrative, affective and therefore perspectival and behaviour shaping impact. Narrative is utilized to place everyday events in normal life within a larger story of God’s activity in continuity with the story of scripture.

Again, Smith’s description of Pentecostal praxis is limited by overgeneralization. He offers a compelling apologetic for the Pentecostal value of

³⁷² Smith, 78–79.

³⁷³ Smith, 80.

experience and emotion in the face of his caricatures of rational theological critique. He frames Pentecostal spirituality within philosophical debates as a viable epistemological approach worth taking seriously as an alternative to certain forms of modern theological inquiry. However, he overplays his characterization of evangelical theology. While there are streams or tendencies toward hyper-rationalism, there is also a high value on narrative and relational, experiential knowledge. Central Presbyterian, from the pulpit to the pew, highly values testimony. While honouring the expert orator qualified by theological degrees and vetted through an ordination process, all the preachers at Central weave personal stories into their sermons, both their own and those of others. It is common for personal story to be the focal point of the sermon, carrying the main point in an effort to aid application in everyday life.

What is distinct, contra Smith, is not the use of story and value of experiential and emotional knowing, but the specific content of the stories. During a Sunday worship service at Central Presbyterian³⁷⁴ a portion of the program was presented by a leader in the children's programs. The content of her five minute message was directed at the children in the audience, but clearly with the adults in mind. This portion of the service was a liturgical cue the 'adult sermon' was about to begin so after a 'children's sermon' kids were guided out of the room by volunteers to their age specific classroom for age specific teaching. Julie had a large blue box in front of her. Getting everyone's attention she pulled a lemon out of the box while telling a story about a doctor who after suffering a stroke was no longer able to speak. It changed his life forever, but rather than give up, he and his wife began to work together writing books. They wrote Christian themed literature for children, serving God and others in a new way despite his unresolved health limitations. She then pulled out a container of lemonade

³⁷⁴ Central Presbyterian, August 6, 2017, 9:45am worship service.

symbolizing human resilience that can turn lemons into lemonade all in the context of serving God. This was followed by a second story about a primary school aged girl diagnosed with cancer. She used her experience to help other children in similar circumstances while in the hospital. Julie shared three stories in total, all the same genre, all with substantial emotional appeal. Each of the characters faced significant challenges that were relatable and applicable to the audience. The key difference, in critique of Smith and highlighting distinctions between Reformed and Pentecostal-Charismatic theology, was the content of the stories. Julie put primary emphasis on the depth of the suffering. It was trauma that would not be resolved or removed, and the characters were forced to creatively accept their circumstances and persevere through their own capacity to make something sweet out of their sour lemons. Divine activity was limited in the stories. The heroes, possibly inadvertently, were the human characters, not God. There were Christian overtones to each story and it was told in the context of a Christian worship event suggesting faith journeys that somehow involved a God who was personally engaged. However, these same stories could have been told with little revision in a gathering of atheists highlighting human resilience in the face of hardship. It is unlikely the same stories would be shared in a Pentecostal worship gathering, despite their relevance. While attendees may be experiencing any number of challenges that are limiting, unresolved and requiring creative resilience, testimonies shared on stage will tend to highlight a God who is powerfully active in surprising ways. For example, the stories may be of symptoms of the stroke or cancer being healed through divine intervention. Or the stories will incorporate more detail around God speaking and moving in the midst of human response to the circumstances. Again, to the main point, the central impact of story in shaping theology is still evident

and intentionally used at Central Presbyterian, even tugging on the heart strings of emotion, but the stories are different in their plotline and point.

Along with differences in content, testimonies of personal experience may be given more authority in Pentecostal communities than in some Reformed settings. Testimony will rarely rival or replace stories from sacred texts in normative significance, but are given more revelatory validity than in many Reformed congregations. In either setting or social group, much will depend on the storyteller and whether the story itself is seen as authentic and trustworthy.

21.5 “An Eschatological Orientation to Mission and Justice”³⁷⁵

A heightened focus on eschatology may be the primary distinguishing feature of Pentecostal spirituality. Glossolalia, physical healing, signs and wonders or emphasis on the immanent presence of God all fall under Pentecostalism’s heightened eschatological orientation. The outpouring of the Spirit as recorded in the book of Acts to continued outpourings throughout history are framed as part of the earth’s ‘last days’ culminating in the kingdom of heaven coming to earth fully.

Smith prefers to emphasize a focus on mission and social justice initiatives in his definition of Pentecostal eschatology. But in the complex diversity of Pentecostal ordinary theology, there are many contradictory and inconsistent views related to social justice, environmental sustainability and restorative engagement with human culture and society. This heightened eschatology can also focus on predicting Christ’s imminent return and varied views on what this means for the natural world and human society including its complete destruction. Focus then shifts, while not strictly on post-

³⁷⁵ Smith, *Thinking in Tongues : Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy*, 82.

mortem salvation, to readiness for a cosmic, cataclysmic event in which right relationship to divine decrees becomes decisive.

Again, in Smith's effort to explain Pentecostal spirituality to non-Pentecostal and possibly even hostile readers he highlights his preferred Pentecostal views while also acknowledging there is diversity. He moves between descriptive and prescriptive modes of analysis, drawing out what he sees as the significant positives in the tradition. In the midst of the diversity, there is a shared understanding of human participation with an immanent, active God in an unfolding journey of restoration of divine will on earth as it is believed to be in heaven. This cosmic drama is happening now in real time and events in possibly unexpected ways. Participating in this story requires radical openness to God and resistance against evil spiritual forces through holistic human engagement of mind, body, will and emotions.

22 REFORMED THEOLOGY THROUGH PENTECOSTAL CRITIQUE

Rather than attempting a comprehensive overview of theological emphases within the Reformed tradition, Reformed theological interaction with Pentecostalism is used to provide context for the tensions Reformed Charismatics experience in congregations like Central. McDonnell has done significant work on Charismatic Renewal in America, documenting various mainline denominational responses during the 1960s and 1970s. His specific analysis of historic Reformed, particularly Presbyterian, reactions adds important background. Then, effort is made to clearly outline a Reformed cessationist versus a Reformed continuist perspective. This is followed by an overview of multiple Reformed scholars who have directly engaged with the Pentecostal tradition theologically, highlighting their diverse assessments and concerns, all grounded in lived spirituality through dialogue with Reformed Charismatics at Central.

22.1 Historical Precedent

Reformed response to Charismatic spirituality goes back to the Reformation itself and subsequent periods in Reformation history. Heightened emphasis on a spirituality of experience, phenomena attributed to signs, wonders and miracles and extra-biblical revelatory knowledge is not unique to the modern Pentecostalism movement. John Calvin engaged such issues, as did major Reformed leaders like Jonathan Edwards and their various interpreters.³⁷⁶ B.B. Warfield's work³⁷⁷ in the early half of the twentieth century proved foundational for many Reformed cessationist perspectives explored further below.³⁷⁸ This next section, rather than walking back through historical debates, focuses on responses to Pentecostalism during the Charismatic Renewal in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s.

As described in the first chapter, this period marked a unique moment in Pentecostal history when mainline American churches began to embrace, or in other cases contend with, Pentecostal spirituality within their own congregations. Enough mainline clergy and congregants accepted Charismatic theology to require analysis and responses from governing bodies at denominational levels. McDonnell focuses his work on this period providing both a collection of original church documents³⁷⁹ and comparative analysis of various responses to Charismatic Renewal.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁶ For an historical overview of the Reformation period see: Stanley M. Burgess, *The Holy Spirit: Medieval Roman Catholic and Reformation Traditions: Sixth-Sixteenth Centuries* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Pubs, 1997).

³⁷⁷ Warfield Benjamin Breckinridge 1851-1921, *Counterfeit Miracles*. ([S.l.]: Hardpress Ltd, 2013).

³⁷⁸ See Ruthven's comprehensive critique of Warfield in Jon Mark Ruthven, "On the Cessation of the Charismata: The Protestant Polemic of Benjamin B. Warfield" (Marquette University, 1989), ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

³⁷⁹ K. McDonnell, *Presence, Power, Praise : Documents on the Charismatic Renewal* (Liturgical Press, 1980).

³⁸⁰ K. McDonnell, *Charismatic Renewal and the Churches* (Seabury Press, 1976).

22.2 Use of Psychological Analysis

During this period, it was common to use psychological analysis in assessing Charismatic praxis, particularly glossolalia.

When the participants believe that the Spirit is present at their meetings and in some sense speaks through them, then one asks the question, “What comes from the Holy Spirit and what comes from the human psyche?” At this point the question of the health of the psyche of those involved must be asked. Thus historic churches were confronted with this question in the 1960s and they responded by appointing commissions to issue reports.³⁸¹

While framed by some as a neutral scientific approach, McDonnell’s work demonstrates the extent assessment was shaped by cultural presuppositions common in the period:

- 1) McDonnell notes trained anthropologist and psychologists who assumed, without adequate examination of individuals, such behaviour was symptomatic of pathology.³⁸² This was despite available evidence suggesting perceptions about tongues speaking was culturally contingent. For example, certain societies did not consider glossolalia as abnormal.
- 2) There was a tendency to find causal links between various markers of social deprivation and Pentecostal praxis. Even further, deprivation was linked to certain personality types or issues. Thus, non-rational expressions of spirituality were attributed to the anxiety and insecurity of those marginalized in a society.³⁸³
- 3) Praxis, particularly glossolalia, was linked to cultural and racial stereotypes.

³⁸¹ McDonnell, 41.

³⁸² McDonnell, 13.

³⁸³ McDonnell, 13.

Per McDonnell,

In this framework one expects this kind of religious behavior from more passionate, excitable peoples, such as the Latins, and this explains adequately the growth of classical Pentecostals in certain countries³⁸⁴

The impact of such presuppositions and stereotypes was compounded by research design and methodology. McDonnell notes the absence of control groups and a tendency to depend on one-time snapshots rather than repeated testing over extended time periods.³⁸⁵ Some of the psychological reports also suggest a limited understanding of the debated spiritual phenomena.³⁸⁶

The impact of such naïve realism in the use of psychological inquiry, McDonnell argues, is hard to underestimate.³⁸⁷ But there are exceptions during this period. He notes the limitations put on psychological assessment in a 1970 United Presbyterian Church study.³⁸⁸ The report argued science was not capable of authenticating commitment to and experience of divine presence and action. Theories attributing religious experience to group hypnosis were refuted, citing examples of phenomena outside and prior to social group interaction. The therapeutic value of religious experiences was disputed. While those with diagnosable pathologies may be drawn to certain Charismatic social groups, there was no evidence of a higher proportion of pathology than in the wider population. They also denied any clear patterns linking certain personality types, educational levels, socio-economic status or other social categories to Charismatic groups or religious experience. This was not just the theology and praxis of poor, marginalized or minority people groups, but included a diverse mix of social and ethnic stratification.

³⁸⁴ McDonnell, 13–14.

³⁸⁵ McDonnell, 150.

³⁸⁶ McDonnell, 54.

³⁸⁷ McDonnell, 15.

³⁸⁸ *Report of the Special Committee on the Work of the Holy Spirit.* (New York: Office of the General Assembly, 1970).

22.3 Presbyterian Special Committee on the Work of the Spirit

Of the various reports issued by denominational governing bodies, McDonnell particularly highlights the work of the Presbyterian Special Committee on the Work of the Spirit responsible for the 1970 report cited above.

No denominational group, with the possible exception of the Canadian bishops, have studied the charismatic renewal with the care and diligence of the Presbyterian Churches.³⁸⁹

The committee was commissioned out of multiple requests during national meetings of the General Assembly in 1968. It was comprised of a diverse group of scholars, psychologists and practitioners. Care was taken to include Reformed theologians who embraced and promoted the Charismatic Renewal, like Dr. J. Rodham Williams. The committee also sought consultation from multiple Pentecostal scholars.

The diversity of their members and thoroughness of their method was matched by sensitivity to the tensions they were addressing. McDonnell notes how “pastoral” the committee’s report was as compared to similar efforts in other denominations.³⁹⁰ In a preliminary report the committee acknowledged dissension within churches, pastors removed from leadership and congregants who felt alienated and were leaving their churches. At the centre of their theological and social analysis was a desire to affirm Christian liberty, cultivate peace and achieve unity in diversity.³⁹¹

The committee’s wide-ranging biblical analysis consistently walked a tension of affirming Charismatic spirituality but rejecting certain elements of Pentecostal theology. Glossolalia was authentic, but a minor part of the life of the early church. Speaking in tongues was not evidence of Spirit baptism, nor was there biblical warrant for a second baptism of the Spirit post-conversion. However, the committee rejected

³⁸⁹ McDonnell, *Charismatic Renewal and the Churches*, 79.

³⁹⁰ McDonnell, 53.

³⁹¹ McDonnell, 52–53.

cessationist views, which limited or diminished the contemporary manifestation of spiritual gifts and phenomena.

We therefore conclude, on the basis of Scripture, that the practice of glossolalia should be neither despised nor forbidden; on the other hand it should not be emphasized nor made normative for the Christian experience. Generally the experience should be private, and those who have experienced a genuine renewal of their faith in this way should be on their guard against divisiveness within the congregation. At the same time those who have received no unusual experiences of the Holy Spirit should be alert to the possibility of a deeper understanding of the gospel and a fuller participation in the gifts of the Spirit – of which love is the greatest.³⁹²

In addressing healing, exorcism and other phenomena the committee again walked a tension of affirmation based on biblical witness and church history, but warned about dangers and abuses.

We know the misuse of mystical experience is an ever-present possibility, but that is no reason to preclude its appropriate use. We believe that those who are newly endowed with gifts and perceptions of the Spirit have an enthusiasm and joy to give and we also believe that those who rejoice in our traditions of having all things done in “decency and order” have a sobering depth to give. We therefore plead for a mutuality of respect and affection.³⁹³

Central in the report was affirmation of different views. All sides and perspectives were honoured and to some degree cautioned as well.

The committee’s work concluded with specific guidelines to respective groups including ministers who have had “neo-Pentecostal” experiences and those who have not, for laity who have and have not, to governing bodies within churches (Sessions) and over churches (Presbyteries). All the principles are rooted in discernment of spiritual experiences through a pragmatic testing of “fruit” marked by openness and

³⁹² *Report of the Special Committee on the Work of the Holy Spirit*, 8.

³⁹³ *Report of the Special Committee on the Work of the Holy Spirit*, 22.

love.

The criteria by which we judge the validity of another's religious experience must ever be its compatibility with the mind and spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we know them in the New Testament. If the consequence and quality of a reported encounter of the Holy Spirit be manifestly conducive to division, self-righteousness, hostility, exaggerated claims of knowledge and power, then the experience is subject to serious question. However, when the experience clearly results in new dimensions of faith, joy, and blessing to others, we must conclude that this is "what the Lord hath done" and offer him our praise.³⁹⁴

The challenge with this pragmatic test of authenticity is negotiating difference of opinion about "the consequence and quality" of particular religious experiences. The biblical narrative is ripe with stories of conflict over divine action. What brings joy and blessing to one may be offensive to another. Hence, the committee's report on the whole offered less clarity about the challenge of discernment in particular situations.

The committee encouraged Reformed Charismatic ministers to affirm and adhere to Presbyterian doctrine and polity, attentively minister to all members of one's congregation and responsibly participate in Presbytery with fellow ministers.³⁹⁵ They also encouraged continued growth in sound biblical exegesis, systematic theological reflection and focus on preaching a full gospel. The committee encouraged ministers *without* neo-Pentecostal experiences to be mindful of historical precedent when times of church renewal brought tension and turmoil. Ministers were charged with ensuring they acquired first-hand knowledge of religious experience among congregants.

Caution was to be taken to avoid surface level or pre-determined judgments.

The report specifically addressed breaking denominational norms:

Keep in mind that neo-Pentecostals may be prone to neglect formal exegesis, systematic theology and adherence to tradition and polity of our denomination. They may, at times, tend toward a new form of legalism, and may consequently be in need of loving guidance from their peers, or from their pastor, or from their session. Like many of the laity within our fellowship, they too frequently need to understand the place and authority of their session. They may also, at

³⁹⁴ *Report of the Special Committee on the Work of the Holy Spirit*, 23.

³⁹⁵ *Report of the Special Committee on the Work of the Holy Spirit*, 23.

times, tend to be over-enthusiastic concerning their experiences, to believe that their experiences should be duplicated by every sincere Christian, to limit their fellowship in the church to those who have had similar experiences to that pastoral guidance is sometimes needed to bring their prayer meetings under the authority of the session and open to all interested members of their congregation.³⁹⁶

While discouraging normative claims regarding personal religious experience, the committee may have inadvertently called for a normative style of biblical interpretation. The same may be said for certain forms of theology, labelled “systematic”. Without going into typologies, there are a myriad of approaches to biblical interpretation and theology, across ecclesial traditions and even traceable along historical shifts in human thought. When framed as a form of analytical style, in which there are multiple, diverse and valid methods of reflection and interpretation, historical-critical, literary analysis as well as systematic theological reflection are the normative standard of Reformed scholars and ministers. To the degree these norms are adhered to, and understood, varies among ministers. And, notably, these are not the operative style among ‘ordinary’ Reformed Christians. When a Pentecostal utilizes a method of biblical interpretation which is more allegorical or theological reflection which is more anecdotal and pragmatic, rather than affirming this as a valid preference, those in the Reformed tradition may tend to view this style with scepticism and even disdain. While allegorical and typological interpretation of a sacred text may have dominated Augustine’s writings, been a hallmark of many a first century Rabbinic teaching and even present in the writings of Paul of Tarsus, norms within the Reformed tradition tend to frame it as a biased, overly subjective read of scripture. “Formal exegesis” and “systematic theology” it is argued, when done well, provide greater access to objective or accurate knowledge about divine character and action. This is all the more significant in Reformed congregations as the interpretation of sacred texts and doctrine

³⁹⁶ *Report of the Special Committee on the Work of the Holy Spirit*, 24–25.

serve as a normative referent for determining the authenticity and accuracy of many other sources of knowledge about the divine, particularly that of religious experience.

If authority is primarily defined as whom or what has the power to ultimately shape and enforce norms and behaviours, in Presbyterian polity, congregational authority is in the hands of the Session. This is a group of lay leaders, elected as part of the church membership, who function as ruling elders of all aspects of the church's governance. Developed based on principles of shared power and accountability, the Session functions with a series of checks and balances allowing no particular person or group to dominate. For example, ordained ministers, while given a role of authority, work alongside and ultimately submit to the authority of the Session. Ruling elders are elected by vote of all members of the congregation to serve a limited term, eventually replaced by newly elected elders. That said, this is an ideal and may not be the operative authority structure in a particular Presbyterian church. As revealed in multiple interviews, Reformed Charismatics at Central Presbyterian were primarily mindful of the influence and authority of "church staff". Only secondarily were they conscience of the authority of Session and fellow church members, and for decidedly different reasons related to socialization and acceptance.

The issue of differing praxis consistently came up in interviews with Reformed Charismatics at Central Presbyterian. So much so, a Reformed Charismatic's ability to negotiate finding a place of like-minded support while also refraining from threatening community wide norms proved decisive in their longevity and overall satisfaction with their faith community. Those who, in their Charismatic zeal, attempt to encourage the whole congregation to experience their spirituality are often met with the greatest resistance. Those who see their religious experience as personal, a valid option among multiple diverse styles, and are content to cultivate this spirituality in private are more

embraced and empowered by the church staff and wider congregation. These “closet Charismatics” who do not threaten Central Presbyterian norms, did so by finding or creating Charismatic groups within or outside the congregation. At times these groups were secretive, even selective, primarily in response to real or perceived persecution. Others were integrated into the life of the entire congregation and under the formal supervision of church staff and Session.

The committee’s report reflects perspectives held among Reformed church leaders today related to Pentecostal influence. With this the committee fails one of the major challenges congregation leaders face: fully acknowledging and addressing the systemic normative shifts that may be required to affirm neo-Pentecostals. One challenge with maintaining unity in diversity is sharing common language, customs, meaningful praxis and beliefs. There is room for differences of interpretation, but at some point the differences become too great and lead to disintegration of community.

For example, during the Sunday morning corporate worship event at Central Presbyterian a portion of the liturgy is devoted to a pastoral prayer. On one particular Sunday the theme of the event was healing. I was invited by the senior leadership to do a specific prayer for physical healing. During the prayer, standing before the 800 people in attendance, my body began to shake. The senior leadership knew about my tendency to demonstrate this physical phenomenon, but often encouraged limiting it in certain settings, particularly corporate gatherings. I trembled, twitched, rocked, but there was no noticeable change in my voice. I did not fall down or roll around, but simply stood in place, shaking. If one had their eyes closed and head bowed they would not have noticed. But, not everyone had their eyes closed that Sunday. Reactions, and more specifically interpretations, were mixed. For some the physical manifestation was a tangible demonstration of divine presence and power. It was

interpreted as a positive sign of God's love and care and engagement in the worship service. For others the interpretation was still spiritual, however, the concern was this must be a sign of demonic, evil activity. Others were concerned about my health. One woman traumatized by the experience left the service reminded of her husband's own seizures that led to paralysis. A neurologist present approached another pastor on staff offering to see me as a patient. Others, like an usher serving that day, joked post-service with me whether he needed to come to the front and hold on to me to support me physically while praying.

This particular event demonstrates how individuals interpret based on prior beliefs and perspectives. It is not uncommon for members of the same social group to interpret an event or experience differently, even in contradictory ways. However, when Reformed Charismatic belief and praxis is affirmed and allowed space in a congregation, is there a need to also attend to a process of corporate interpretation of the praxis? In this particular case the leadership of Central Presbyterian allowed an exception to the norm. They allowed a minority practice to be visible to the majority in a particular, relevant situation--a prayer for physical healing. This was not random, but carefully considered and deemed appropriate. However, the leadership may not have been prepared for the longer process of addressing different interpretations influencing the various, at times strong, reactions among the congregation.

The United Presbyterian committee's report acknowledges openness to neo-Pentecostalism will result in tension and change, but they neglect to provide adequate guidance on how to facilitate this change, particularly at the level of congregational norms. McDonnell echoes the significance of theological norms:

When a Lutheran or Presbyterian takes over not only the central insights and experience of the classical Pentecostal tradition but also its fundamentalist exegesis, its systematic theology, and its cultural baggage, then hopes to work

effectively within a Lutheran or Presbyterian context, such a person and his denomination are faced with almost insurmountable difficulties.³⁹⁷

This “cultural baggage” McDonnell refers to extends beyond normative preferences related to religious experience. He recognizes what was also evident in interviews at Central Presbyterian: religious experience on its own rarely causes the most sustained tension and division. It may be the most tangible evidence or the precipitating flash point, but often the threat of changes to ‘the way we do things’ is the core issue.

Without some form of process, dialogue or leadership that allows for clarity about a common understanding of such phenomena, Reformed Charismatics are left to fend for themselves. As a minority they are easily misunderstood and without a concerted effort by the majority, disproportionality burdened in doing the work of theological debate and dialogue. In some cases this may lead to fatigue and isolation. It can result in retreat to safer settings of shared perspectives and praxis or leaving the congregation altogether, both discouraged by the committee.

However, for some Reformed Charismatics, being a ‘closet Charismatic’ is preferred. For example, Rachel, a long time member of Central, believes God speaks to her personally and frequently about information she needs to share with others. She trusts her discernment of this voice and acts on her interpretations of divine directives. This has never proved a challenge in her involvement at Central Presbyterian. Rachel is passionate about music, healing and prayer and has found ways to do all three at Central. As a committed choir member and valued part of the inner healing and anointing prayer teams, Rachel feels challenged, utilized and fully satisfied as a Reformed Charismatic.

Two additional factors may be driving Rachel’s satisfaction with the church, which she herself did not consciously highlight in interviews. Several of her stories

³⁹⁷ McDonnell, *Charismatic Renewal and the Churches*, 42.

revealed preferences about Charismatic spirituality and how it was expressed. Take for example her approach to offering anointing prayer after church services. Typically she stands on her own off to the side of the sanctuary and individuals are able to approach her on their own with a request for prayer. Rachel commonly experiences “God speak directly to her about them.”³⁹⁸ She then shares these ‘divine messages’ with the prayer recipient. This deviates from typical anointing prayer practices at Central Presbyterian and is not endorsed by leadership. Rachel’s style may be more common in a church affirming personal prophetic prayer, where it is accepted that God speaks directly to certain members of the community about other members and within certain guidelines these prophetic messages are shared. But, while feeling very bold and free to openly prophesy, Rachel expressed how uncomfortable she was with being noticed for it. She likened the inner healing prayer team to the United States Navy Seals, an elite, specially trained group in the military that operate on covert missions. They “get in, do the job and get out” without any fanfare or recognition. Hence she was embarrassed when after one service the pastor announcing the opportunity to receive anointing prayer post-worship mentioned Rachel by name in front of the whole congregation. ‘Rachel is here and she is amazing at praying for you.’

This same preference is evident in her hesitancy with sharing stories about her religious experiences. She has all manner of dynamic experiences she attributes confidently to divine action like physical healing, special knowledge, deep intimate encounters and more. However, she is not interested in testifying openly to others in private or public about these experiences. She does share some detail in specific situations, but with caution. Her primary concern is not to offend or harm others, particularly concerned it may make them feel inferior in their relationship with God or

³⁹⁸ Interview with “Rachel,” August 2, 2017.

create expectations that will only lead to disappointment. This is the polar opposite perspective of some in Pentecostal contexts. As explored above, JKA Smith notes the significant role of testimonies in Pentecostal spirituality particularly as it relates to shaping a corporate narrative. Sharing a testimony, it is believed, can lead a hearer to key insights and even experiencing similar divine action. Testimony is a vehicle by which expectations are increased and the faith of others is bolstered. Rachel is thriving as a Reformed Charismatic at Central because although her beliefs and some praxis are Pentecostal-like, her style is much more at home in Central Presbyterian norms.

Kate's experience is the opposite of Rachel's. As noted above, those who don't find a supportive subgroup or want others to experience and affirm what they are experiencing, essentially wanting majority theology and praxis to change, express dissatisfaction at Central. According to Kate,

look, most Presbyterians start and end a meeting with prayer, the rest of the time it is all about human capacity [...] I'm praying the whole time and consistently trying to discern what it is God is saying to do and I suggested we do things that most people thought was impossible because it was impractical, but with God it was possible and I would do things and it would work, but it made them uncomfortable³⁹⁹

Kate worked on staff at Central Presbyterian in a role requiring significant communal involvement. While on staff she attended an independent Charismatic church in her community where her style of prayer, decision making and leadership was welcome and encouraged. For a time she did find a subgroup at Central, as a volunteer in the youth ministry, but after she was overlooked for a staff promotion, Kate left Central.

Changing norms, shifting the 'way we do things here', involves significant risk and requires effort. Central Presbyterian's current senior pastor bears witness to this reality. Reputations and stereotypes don't always accurately represent the complexity and diversity within a social group, but prior to Reverend Dale's tenure Central was

³⁹⁹ Interview with "Kate," August 2, 2017.

known as an insulated, affluent suburban ‘country club’ type of church. At its most basic the label connotes the type of organization that exists to serve and satisfy its own membership. Reverend Dale had an entirely different vision for the congregation. He wanted a rare type of social group that existed to meet the needs of those outside itself. To quote mantras common in communicating this vision, Central Presbyterian was to “turn outward through acts of service to show the community the real Jesus”. Dale wanted Central Presbyterian to not just be a church the city lived with, but could not live without. Practically this looked like mobilizing Central into an active service organization.

For example, the most recent capital campaign was launched out of a need to finance a new building on the church campus primarily for the use of families in the church. Leadership added two additional projects to the capital campaign to align with Reverend Dale’s outward facing vision. Proceeds were raised to purchase a local unused community building and convert it into a service centre. Remaining funds were used to partner with a non-profit in Rwanda to construct an orphanage. Simultaneously, one floor of the new building on the church campus was designed to house the alternative high school. While there was significant buy-in for Dale’s vision, there was also resistance. Some felt the outward facing projects threatened their own work within the congregation that required funding, volunteers and support from senior leadership. It also created a tension interpersonally as some members felt judged and diminished for their lack of enthusiasm for these various service projects. In a sense everyone was supportive of the humanitarian vision behind the decision. There has always been support of social justice at Central Presbyterian. At issue was shifting the entire church toward this vision through specific initiatives.

It made the sacrifice of leading change very poignant for Dale. At one culminating moment in the process, the city newspaper published an article honouring the impact of the church on the city, highlighting the work of the community centre and other major programs spear-headed by Central Presbyterian. The article was for many a tangible mark of success to be celebrated, but for Dale it was a point of pain. In many ways his vision had been realized, but the cost in church conflicts, relationships, time with his family and his own energy made him wonder if it was all worth it.

So when it came to a growing interest in Charismatic spirituality among congregants, Dale was all too aware of the price to be paid in shifting the majority theology and praxis to become Reformed Charismatic. This was demonstrated when making the decision to invite speakers from the controversial Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship (TACF), now Catch the Fire Ministries, to lead a weekend conference on “soaking prayer” at the church.⁴⁰⁰ Several members of staff had already visited TACF, including Dale himself. Their experience was positive. But, TACF and the renewal movement arising out of it had also been implicated in church splits. In the stereotypical narrative, a pastor goes to a conference at TACF, has a religious experience, then returns to his own church and attempts to replicate this same spirituality among his own congregation, with mixed results.

There are a number of common criticisms of TACF’s theology and praxis, but often cited is the prevalence of peculiar physical manifestations. This includes participants shaking, falling down, rolling around and most controversial, making what

⁴⁰⁰ For a positive sociological portrayal of the “Toronto Blessing” see: Margaret M Poloma, *Main Street Mystics : The Toronto Blessing and Reviving Pentecostalism* (Walnut Creek, CA. : AltaMira, 2003).

appear to be animal noises.⁴⁰¹ Were this a small, fringe movement it would likely have gained little attention; however, some associate the events at TACF with a divinely initiated eschatological movement of global revival. Millions made pilgrimages to Toronto to witness, receive and “spread the fire” in their own contexts.

The conference held at Central Presbyterian was themed around “soaking prayer,” a brand name TACF used for their version of the traditional Christian practice of contemplative prayer. “Soaking” is a metaphor for spiritual formation. Per TACF leadership, just as a cucumber becomes a pickle by soaking in brine for a significant amount of time, one becomes like Christ by ‘soaking’ in Christ’s presence. Hallmark in TACF’s core teachings are the immanence of divine presence and a theology centred on God as a loving, affection Father figure. The aim of “soaking prayer” is intimacy with God and empowerment for daily living.

Although the TACF soaking prayer conference was to be held on a weekend separate from any other church activities and particularly separate from Sunday morning corporate worship gatherings, the congregation knew in an intuitive way this event marked a shift. The most significant indication was not the focus on prayer. Tonya, an associate pastor who originally pioneered the inner healing, anointing prayer and spiritual direction teams, already regularly held prayer retreats for four to six hours on Saturdays. These events were always open to the entire congregation and inevitably only a small group of interested Reformed Charismatics attended. Obviously the prominence of and controversy surrounding TACF was significant. But the really decisive indication this was something more than a special event for a particular minority group was who issued the invitation. Dale was the one sharing the story of

⁴⁰¹ For an evangelical theological critique of the TACF see: David Hilborn, *“Toronto” in Perspective : Papers on the New Charismatic Wave of the Mid-1990’s* (Carlisle: Acute, 2001).

experiencing God at the conference he attended at TACF. And Dale is the senior pastor. As much as the polity of Central Presbyterian is rooted in democratic principles and the leadership of the Session, at Central Presbyterian the senior pastor is in charge. His role is dominant and representative. It was one thing to have an associate youth pastor shake while praying in front of the congregation. This was a one off moment and really no other pastors were demonstrating this type of religious experience. It could be kept in the category of other Reformed Charismatics: an approved, special, off to the side minority praxis. But, the TACF soaking prayer conference proved another matter entirely.

As Dale went through the rigors of preparing for the conference, it became clear Charismatic spirituality was not a hill he was willing to die on. Multiple members of staff were indirectly dragging their feet along with the more outspoken rejections of concerned members. Dale had many tense conversations in his office. YouTube videos of TACF church services with chaotic scenes of physical manifestations added fuel to the fire. A vocal minority labelled Dale a cult leader.

Dale was well aware of the controversy and tension, the danger of church splits and of the challenge of changing norms. He felt an assurance about the need to turn the church outward toward community service. This sustained him through the pain of change management. He likened himself to Moses with an at times confusing God and ungrateful people. He did not have this same assurance when it came to shifting the church to be Reformed Charismatic. As the conference approached and more and more people both signed up and expressed their disapproval, Dale began to try to control the potential fallout of the event. He asked the speakers to limit their emphasis on the experiential, requesting the event not end up like the YouTube clips. Pre- and post-

conference he preached a clear message that everyone could and should experience God differently and there was no normative religious experience for mature Christians.

Logistically the conference went smoothly. To Dale's surprise and fear, the turnout for the conference was significant. Over 500 people attended. Conference sessions were dominated by teaching content with limited time spent in prayer. Ironically those who came expecting to experience God more tangibly left disappointed, bored with all the speaking. Those who came with reservations were more often than not comforted by the teaching. It sounded more familiar to their Reformed, evangelical theology than they expected.

On the whole, rather than a turning point in a church wide theological shift, things essentially remained the same at Central Presbyterian post conference. The event brought Reformed Charismatic theology and praxis out of the 'closet' and forced private conversations and conflicts out into the public. In some ways clearer boundary lines were drawn about what was acceptable religious experience. But, the standard indirect, ad hoc operating procedure of addressing Charismatic theology and praxis remained the norm. Central Presbyterian does not have any official written statement offering doctrinal positions or guidance about religious experience. There is more a subtle, relational, unstated understanding about rules. There are certain times and places for certain types of religious experience. Congregants who prefer, for example, to raise their hands in the air while singing worship songs know which Sunday corporate worship events this is permitted and even encouraged and which it is not.

Such an indirect approach to maintaining norms is not unique to religious experience. Generally, congregants know expectations of behaviour related to everything from dress to social interaction depending on the setting or event. It is rare to see someone in a suit at the 6pm Sunday evening worship service, whereas more

formal attire is common in the morning services. These morning services are often even termed “traditional” by some, much to the choir director’s frustration. One knows not to raise her hand to ask a question during the sermon, as she would in a Sunday school class, when she doesn’t understand the content of the teaching. It would seem strange and awkward for a congregant to stand during the sermon, yet possibly offensive to remain seated during the singing of certain hymns.

Many of these norms are shaped through perspectives storied and behaviour modelled publicly. When stories of religious experience are incorporated into a sermon or through a testimony, they are framed in a particular way and only permissible experiences are talked about. I am unaware of a story incorporating an experience of glossolalia for example. But, stories are told of people hearing God’s voice, usually in a form that is subtle, such as a calm still voice, like a thought in one’s mind. Ecstatic or emotionally expressive religious experience is rarely modelled, hence the peculiarity and numerous conflicting interpretations of my shaking during a pastoral prayer. Yet, everyone knows it is normal to close one’s eyes and bow ones head, even clasping one’s hands when praying.

Enforcement of norms at Central Presbyterian is also a subtle and indirect process. Correcting behaviour, if done directly, occurs in private. Public rebuke is through social cues. A significant amount of negotiating theological difference occurs behind closed doors. Dale recounted that when he first entered the role of senior pastor, several people, primarily older in age, primarily women, all long-time committed members, organized individual meetings with the new pastor independently of one another. At some point in the conversation about various topics, each would pause, look around the pastor’s office as if ensuring they would not be overheard, lean in and disclose an example of their Charismatic spirituality. They would then sit back

and see how Dale reacted. ‘When I pray for people, they are healed.’ ‘Sometimes I’ve prayed and demons have come out of people.’ ‘I speak in tongues.’ Dale offered his approval. He was okay with their religious experience so long as no one suggested it needed to become normative for others.

As already noted, religious expression shifts depending on the setting and the leader overseeing the event or gathering. Reformed Charismatics are well aware of differing perspectives about their praxis among church staff. Four associate pastors were consistently mentioned in interviews related to the recent history of Central Presbyterian. Multiple of those interviewed credit Tonya with supporting their growth in Charismatic theology and praxis. She oversaw the various prayer ministries in the church. The senior associate pastor, Anna, has a reputation of being a Reformed Charismatic, based on the content of her sermons, programs she supports and various tendencies in her leadership. She is in a significant position, essentially second in leadership behind the senior pastor. And multiple of those interviewed were aware of my leadership in the youth ministry. The fourth is another associate pastor who has assumed leadership of the various prayer ministries in the church after Tonya’s departure. Daria is a complex figure. Interviewees described her resistance to Charismatic theology and praxis. Because of her role, Reformed Charismatics have to work with her and at times around her in their various prayer initiatives. These leaders are discussed more below, but it is worth noting the theological impact of the leader ‘in the room’. Within the same church, one could walk into a youth service and experience a different style of religious experience than when at an inner healing prayer session. Certain specialized prayer events or ministries which may have been welcomed under one associate pastor’s area of influence are not allowed in another’s.

Thus, Reformed Charismatics, like many minority groups, learn the places and people who affirm or resist their theology and praxis and respond accordingly.

Ultimately, the United Presbyterian special committee may have been soberly realistic in their recommendations to affirm Charismatic theology but warn against corporate, majority theological change. Some Reformed Charismatics, like Rachel, prefer being a hidden minority. Others are willing to sacrifice significantly to see congregational reform. Most clear, congregational change is complex, divisive and difficult. As a result, being a Reformed Charismatic involves at times complex ecumenical communication and adaptation.

22.4 Cessationists vs. Continuists

22.4.1 MacArthur

It is important to set the context for many of the theological divisions and debates in Reformed churches about Pentecostal-Charismatic theology and praxis. If placed on a continuum of views on Charismatic religious experience, on one extreme are cessationists, on the opposite extreme continuists. John MacArthur, senior pastor of Grace Community Church near Los Angeles, California, a non-denominational evangelical church steeped in the Reformed tradition, argues for a popular version of a cessationist perspective. MacArthur's voice is valuable both for his conviction and his significant influence. While exploring doctrinal debates and differences in biblical interpretation, attention below is kept on the tension around theology and praxis apparent in MacArthur's writings, rooted in different epistemological frameworks.

MacArthur's *Strange Fire* aims to precisely identify his primary concerns with Pentecostal-Charismatic praxis.

On the one hand, some mainstream evangelicals are guilty of neglecting the Holy Spirit altogether [...] On the other hand, the modern Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements have pushed the pendulum to the opposite extreme.

They have fostered an unhealthy preoccupation with supposed manifestations of the Holy Spirit's power. Committed charismatics talk incessantly about phenomena, emotions, and the latest wave or sensation. They seem to have comparatively little (sometimes *nothing*) to say about Christ, His atoning work, or the historical facts of the gospel. [...] The 'Holy Spirit' found in the vast majority of charismatic teaching and practice bears no resemblance to the true Spirit of God as revealed in Scripture. [...] By inventing a Holy Spirit of idolatrous imaginations, the modern Charismatic Movement offers strange fire that has done incalculable harm to the body of Christ. Claiming to focus on the third member of the Trinity, it has in fact profaned His name and denigrated His true work.⁴⁰²

MacArthur's stance affirms the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's activity. He is not denying there is a spiritual realm impacting human agency, not denying demonic activity and a spiritual battle—all affirmed by Pentecostal-Charismatic theology. His critiques primarily focus on form and style. Central to his concern is an elevated epistemological role of experience.

For MacArthur it is an egregious error to allow experience to shape doctrine. He acknowledges experience is revelatory in the biblical narrative and church history. But, according to MacArthur, these prior periods were unique. The Spirit, for MacArthur and others arguing for a cessationist theology, doesn't work in the same way anymore.

The "true ministry of the Holy Spirit," per MacArthur is "not chaotic, flashy and flamboyant (like a circus)" instead it is "concealed and inconspicuous (the way fruit develops)". The Holy Spirit's primary role is to "exalt Christ". The Spirit does this through personal conviction of sin, revealing true righteousness, and affirming our accountability to God's judgment. The Spirit is present to believers, indwelling them, empowering them "to serve and glorify Christ" and sanctifying believers.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰² John MacArthur, *Strange Fire : The Danger of Offending the Holy Spirit with Counterfeit Worship*, 2013, xiii.

⁴⁰³ MacArthur, xvii.

There's nothing baffling, bizarre, or irrational about being Spirit-filled or Spirit-led. His work is not to produce a spectacle or to foment chaos. In fact, where you see those things, you can be certain it is *not* His doing.⁴⁰⁴

Thus, emotionally or physically expressive forms of religious experience are false.

Authentic spirituality is rational, calm, controlled and orderly.⁴⁰⁵

The influence of Pentecostal-Charismatic theology for MacArthur has been “devastating”. He likens Charismatics to a Trojan horse for evangelicals.

In recent history, no other movement has done more to damage the cause of the gospel, to distort the truth, and to smother the articulation of sound doctrine. Charismatic theology has turned the evangelical church into a cesspool of error and a breeding ground for false teachers. It has warped genuine worship through unbridled emotionalism, polluted prayer with private gibberish, contaminated true spirituality with unbiblical mysticism.⁴⁰⁶

For MacArthur all this is rooted in giving personal experience epistemological weight in understanding divine character and activity. In MacArthur's judgment, experience has been elevated above the authority of Scripture thereby destroying the “church's immune system—uncritically granting free access to every imaginable form of heretical teaching and practice”⁴⁰⁷.

The critical and systemic defect within charismatic theology a flaw that accounts for just about every theological aberration or abnormality that makes its home within the Charismatic Movement [...] is this: Pentecostals and charismatics elevate religious experience over biblical truth. Though many of them pay lip service to the authority of God's Word, in practice they deny it. [...] They ought to reinterpret their experiences to match the Bible; instead, they reinterpret Scripture in novel and unorthodox ways in order to justify their experiences. With its lack of biblical controls and its emphasis on experience-driven subjectivism, the Charismatic Movement is custom-made for false teachers and spiritual con men.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁴ MacArthur, xviii.

⁴⁰⁵ MacArthur, 76–77.

⁴⁰⁶ MacArthur, xv.

⁴⁰⁷ MacArthur, xvi.

⁴⁰⁸ MacArthur, 16–17.

Throughout his argument, MacArthur draws a clear distinction between subjective personal experience and objective truth found in sound doctrine in the form of timeless propositional statements.⁴⁰⁹

The troubling piece about MacArthur's argument isn't his intolerance for other approaches to epistemology and religious experience nor his normative claims rooted in his own subjectivity, it is his apparent lack of self-awareness about his own presuppositions and preferences. In other words, MacArthur seems unaware of the influence of context and culture. He argues for universal truths rooted in normative doctrines that direct specific styles of praxis. Further, there is an epistemological contradiction in MacArthur's critique. He affirms illumination of the Bible through the Holy Spirit. That is, the Spirit may provide specific, personal information or revelation to a Christian. However, this information is limited to the specific activity of reading sacred texts.

Believer's [...] have been made alive by the Spirit of God, who now indwells them. Thus Christians have a resident Truth Teacher who enlightens their understanding of the Word—enabling them to know and submit to the truth of Scripture (cf. 1 John 2:27).⁴¹⁰

MacArthur makes a distinction between “inspiration” and “illumination”. And again, the fundamental distinction is historical authority. Only the original biblical authors were “inspired” by the Holy Spirit. Today, Christians no longer receive this form of revelation apart from the biblical text.⁴¹¹ For MacArthur, this illumination of scripture is itself limited. Many “theological secrets” are still not revealed. “Godly teachers” are required to aid in understanding the meaning of sacred texts. One must remain disciplined, doing the hard work of careful study of the texts. But with the correct amount of support and diligence, the Spirit will provide an ability to comprehend and

⁴⁰⁹ MacArthur, 73–74.

⁴¹⁰ MacArthur, 225.

⁴¹¹ MacArthur, 225.

accept the bible's teaching.⁴¹² So, the Spirit is capable of speaking personally to a Christian; however, within all the constraints described.

MacArthur fails in his argument to address different interpretations of the same sacred texts. He does not think experience influences interpretation of sacred text, only the Spirit. Better said, it is the Spirit in combination with "godly teachers" and their various resources to aid in biblical interpretation. Thus, MacArthur affirms a certain type of naïve and highly idealized epistemological realism, which ironically is incredibly constrained and limited. So long as the Christian is adhering to apparently inerrant doctrine and reading the inerrant biblical text then they will access absolute, normative truth. Apart from said doctrine and study of the biblical text, then error is rampant and beyond the Spirit's illuminating capacity.

Aside from epistemological and cultural naiveté, MacArthur's argument is hampered by his extreme examples and depictions of Pentecostals and Charismatics. Surely some of the corruption, emotional extremism and heightened emphasis on experience are evident in concrete, real life examples. Yet, he in a sense creates a straw man that lacks adequate particularity and obscures the diversity within Charismatic spirituality. While MacArthur does offer descriptions of a nuanced evangelical form of Charismatic theology, he maintains his purist tendencies. He is more gentle in critique of these Charismatic evangelicals, what he labels "continuationist friends,"⁴¹³ but he is convinced they are on a slippery slope of inevitable corruption and error from which they must turn back with urgency.

⁴¹² MacArthur, 226.

⁴¹³ MacArthur, 231.

22.4.2 Four Different Views

Wayne Grudem takes a more dialogical approach to evangelical debates about Charismatic theology and praxis. Rather than a bilateral dialogue between ‘cessationist’ and ‘continuist’ views, Grudem identifies four different perspectives in his book *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?*⁴¹⁴ and selects four scholars to write position papers and dialogue from each viewpoint. Richard Gaffin defends a cessationist perspective. Robert Saucy represents an open but cautious evangelical perspective, framed as the middle ground of divergent views. The “Third Wave” view, framed in continuity with Pentecostal-Charismatic theology but distinct enough to warrant a separate perspective, is articulated by Samuel Storms. The Pentecostal-Charismatic perspective is presented by Douglas Oss.

Their dialogue is dominated by biblical interpretation and theological analysis. Little attention is given to praxis, particular contexts nor necessarily the variety of diverging emphases within each of the four viewpoints. Instead focus is on the biblical and theological warrant assumed to be underpinning the praxis related to these different positions.

Their dialogical method aided deeper understanding across divergent perspectives. Interestingly, and not unexpectedly, the collegial dialogue did not result in any changes, even minor adjustments, in the views articulated in each author’s initial position paper. Instead, the conversation made clear that Protestant scholars, sharing markedly similar perspectives related to biblical interpretation and theological method, still interpret the same texts and historical data differently.

For example, they each identify the same key biblical passages for their arguments. Passages from Luke-Acts and the Pauline epistles are of particular interest

⁴¹⁴ Richard B. Gaffin and Wayne A. Grudem, *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? : Four Views* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub., 1996).

in the debate. Gaffin interprets the Pentecost events recorded in Acts 2 as evidence of a unique epochal moment in redemptive history, not to be repeated, nor establishing a new normative standard.⁴¹⁵ Storms and Oss view the same events recorded in Acts 2 as evidence of the inauguration of a new reality of divine-human relationship and spiritual praxis still on going today.

The scholars acknowledge debate did not provide greater clarity about the passages, but only revealed their divergent interpretive paradigms. Gaffin's, and to some extent Saucy's, interpretive framework is rooted in the presupposition that during the apostolic era of the first century the bible was still an "open cannon". Thus, prophesy and experience were valid and necessary sources of knowledge. However, once the cannon was "closed" these forms of revelatory gifts were no longer needed and no longer provided. Divine revelation shifted, as MacArthur argues. Storms and Oss however, bring a different interpretive framework to the text. This period is seen as the inauguration of the long awaited "last days" and the signs, wonders, miracles and forms of knowledge the apostles experienced are available to all Christians until final fulfilment of the eschatological expectation marked by Jesus' return and a restoration of the kingdom of heaven on earth. As Oss aptly observes,

Both of these "models," or "frameworks," are being used to exclude evidence from the other position. For example, Gaffin can identify any evidence I bring against cessationism as belonging to the open-canon period and thus deny its continuing function. Likewise, I can deny Gaffin's arguments by appealing to the continuing nature of the "last days" and the characteristic, miraculous activity of the Spirit that defines this epoch. It will be up to the reader to determine which paradigm more naturally arises from the Bible and the redemptive-historical unfolding we observe in its structure. The two paradigms clash profoundly.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁵ Richard B Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost: New Testament Teaching on the Gifts of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Presbyterian & Reformed; Baker, 1979), 22.

⁴¹⁶ Gaffin and Grudem, *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? : Four Views*, 311–12.

Thus, more valuable than debating sacred texts is acknowledging presuppositions and interpretive frameworks.

This same issue of interpretive grids is evident in debates about historical evidence. Each author in turn tries to demonstrate the ceasing, continuation or seasonal nature of miracles by appealing to the same historical data. Like with biblical passages, historic accounts are interpreted differently. Saucy sees fluctuations in the amount and intensity of miraculous divine activity and based on this interpretation of the data concludes:

miracles were not a daily or even a weekly occurrence, and some times of history far eclipsed others in the magnitude of miraculous activity. The very fact that miraculous phenomena were not constant throughout the history of God's people in the Old Testament should caution us against assuming that the level of miracles in the early church of the apostles is constant for all of subsequent church history.⁴¹⁷

[...]

The cumulative evidence we have examined—the limitation of the apostolic gift to the first generation, the clusters of miracles in the biblical record, and the evidence from church history—points unmistakably to the fact that there were special times of miraculous activities in which the miracles functioned primarily as signs. Since the time of Christ and the apostles was such a time of extraordinary miracles, the same level of activity cannot be seen as the norm of all church history.⁴¹⁸

Storms is not willing to accept this read of history. He cautions against making an argument from circumstantial or literary genre silence of the text. He also critiques Saucy for dismissing certain accounts of miraculous activity in church history because of their peculiarity, citing multiple unusual events in the biblical text. Further, any perceived or real fluctuations in the amount and intensity of certain forms of divine activity is not indicative, as per Gaffin and Saucy, of divine will or ability. Rather, any decrease can be attributed to human disobedience or unbelief.

⁴¹⁷ Gaffin and Grudem, 104–5.

⁴¹⁸ Gaffin and Grudem, 117–18.

A final key concern evident in this dialogue and many Reformed critiques of Pentecostal-Charismatic theology and praxis is the issue of on going revelation. The authority and uniqueness of the bible is central to certain Reformed perspectives. Any suggestion that divine knowledge is accessible apart from the sacred canon or viewed with equal authority is perceived as a threat. It diminishes the uniqueness of the sacred text and to some, like Gaffin, the uniqueness of the identity and ministry of Jesus Christ. Oss, Storms and Saucy all aim to strike a balance between continued divine revelation and the authority of scripture. None are comfortable putting on going revelation on par with scripture, but also uncomfortable with limiting all divine communication and insight to illumination of sacred text. So, in different and vary degrees they suggest ways of categorizing continuing revelation and discerning its validity and authority. An example of this is offered in the section focused on Williams' work below.

22.5 Specific Reformed Theological Responses

This section highlights specific Reformed scholars who have directly engaged with Pentecostal-Charismatic theology and praxis. There is a danger here of redundancy as many of the critiques are shared among the scholars. Rather than offering a comprehensive overview of each, a key emphasis is selected in the work of each scholar to collectively provide a broad overview of similarities and differences in Reformed theological responses.⁴¹⁹ Dialogue with Reformed Charismatic ordinary theology is incorporated throughout to ground the theological reflection while

⁴¹⁹ B.B. Warfield is often cited as penning the original academic argument for cessationism from a Reformed perspective in Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918). His arguments are picked up by the scholars discussed in this section. Warfield's work is well outlined and refuted in Jon Ruthven's, *On the Cessation of the Charismata: The Protestant Polemic of Benjamin B. Warfield* (Ann Arbor: Marquette University, 1989).

simultaneously providing context and insight into the lived theology and tensions these Reformed Charismatics experience.

22.5.1 Dale Bruner and the Bible

In the 1970s, Dale Bruner, a Reformed biblical scholar, acknowledged the significance and value of “Pentecostal experience of the Spirit”. He personally engaged with Pentecostal praxis himself, asking whether he too should have such an experience.

Should I have the Pentecostal experience? As Pentecostals sometimes put it: Did I want more than a head knowledge, did I want a heart knowledge of the Pentecostal gift first known by the apostles and known now by Pentecostals themselves? This question of “should I,” and then the larger churchly question of “should we,” led me as a Protestant to the New Testament. The result is this essay.⁴²⁰

This is a common method of inquiry within the Reformed tradition. When faced with a question of praxis or debate about doctrine, the tendency is to turn to sacred texts, at times to historical interpretation of the texts. Substantial authority is given to those educated in theology and biblical interpretation. Through study of the bible, Bruner argues, one can access the truth.

The test of anything calling itself Christian is not its significance or its success or its power, though these make the test more imperative. The test is the truth. As Protestant Christians, therefore, the duty devolves upon us to assess the Pentecostal movement, first of all, in the light of the New Testament witnesses.⁴²¹

Bruner starts his analysis with a brief description of Pentecostal spirituality and reserves the bulk of his argument for evaluating Pentecostalism based on exegesis of the New Testament.

⁴²⁰ Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit: The Pentecostal Experience and the New Testament Witness*. (London: London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971), 8.

⁴²¹ Bruner, 33–34.

However naively realistic this methodological approach, it is hampered from the outset by a narrow view of Pentecostal pneumatology. Bruner focuses almost exclusively on speaking in tongues as evidence of post-conversion baptism of the Spirit. Such a characterisation of Pentecostal theology is not uncommon in Reformed circles. Bruner writes during the Charismatic Renewal when speaking in tongues and a theology of baptism of the Spirit was a central, divisive issue. While still debated today, glossolalia does not have the same theological significance particularly in Charismatic independent churches. It indicates of a lack of understanding of a different tradition's beliefs and willingness to rely on perceptions and characterizations. For example, one woman interviewed at Central Presbyterian was initially puzzled as to my interest in speaking with her. Although many see her as very open to Charismatic theology and praxis, she let me know from the start she didn't speak in tongues so may be no help to my research project. It was just the opposite as she described personal praxis and theology dominated by experience associated with Pentecostal spirituality. She like others in mainline churches during the Charismatic Renewal of the 1960s and 1970s, were either taught or perceived glossolalia as a crucial criterion, marking one's maturity and status in the movement.

Bruner finds the Pentecostal doctrine of glossolalia wanting. Per Bruner,

The basic New Testament word for the evidence of the Spirit is faith. Faith in Christ is not only the means, but it is also the evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence in Christian life. It is in this sense also that the Christian gospel is 'Through faith for faith' (Rom 1:17).⁴²²

For Bruner, Pentecostal second baptism bears the marks of circumcision debates in the early church or adherence to Catholic rites during the Protestant Reformation. Any additional criterion beyond profession of faith is viewed with suspicion.

The second major critique Bruner levels against Pentecostal spirituality is

⁴²² Bruner, 281.

diminishing the significance of the suffering and death of Jesus—of the ‘cross’.

God’s way of working in the world—to men an inefficient way, and thus a proof of its divinity—is the way of weakness. The crucified Christ himself is this way’s classic content; the cross its classic form; the struggling church (and church member) its classic sphere. Men are saved by believing this content and serve by assuming this form in this sphere. But hidden in the cross and weakness (corporate and individual) and revealed in the church to faith is resurrection power. When...weak, then...strong (IICor 12:10)⁴²³

Bruner here echoes a common Reformed critique of Pentecostal-Charismatic theology and praxis: overemphasis on power to the neglect of suffering. In the language of eschatological expectation, Reformed theology stereotypically emphasizes what has not yet been realized in Jesus’ atoning sacrifice and critique Pentecostal spirituality for an over-realized eschatology. This is both an issue theologically and practically as Pentecostal-Charismatic emphasis on God’s mighty deeds sounds inauthentic to those whose experience is more a lack of God’s provision and power. Reformed theodicy tends to find answers in a high view of the sovereignty of God and biblical accounts of suffering, persecution, sacrifice and perseverance.

In summary, Bruner’s critiques are fairly typical of a Reformed perspective. He questions the need for experiential evidence (particularly tongues) and is uncomfortable with tendencies toward triumphalism. His identification of Pentecostalism with emphasis on experience of the Spirit is appropriate and echoed in the work of many scholars, but unfortunately he centres his critique on glossolalia to the neglect of other forms of experience. This fits Bruner’s context as glossolalia was a major source of contention at his writing. However, his interpretation of tongues is truncated. Bruner centres tongues on questions of conversion and soteriology. While not without warrant, missing is the significance of eschatology in Pentecostalism. Bruner is overplaying his Reformed theological presuppositions with a dominant focus on

⁴²³ Bruner, 319.

salvation by faith alone and the elevated role of scripture in evaluation of truth, while not allowing Pentecostalism to stand on its own theological moorings.

22.5.2 I John Hesselink and Creating a Hybrid Theology

Hesselink seeks to find common ground between the Reformed and Pentecostal-Charismatic traditions while acknowledging their differences.

At first it might appear the Reformed tradition and the approach and theology of the charismatic movement are basically different, if not antithetical, entities. For of all the Protestant tradition, the Reformed has been noted for its emphasis on doctrine and theology as such. The charismatic movement, on the other hand, places great emphasis on experience. The Reformed churches are noted for their theologians, not their “saints” or evangelists. We glory in our confessions and catechisms, solid theology and pure doctrine. Charismatic and Pentecostal groups, on the other hand, boast of healings and ecstatic experiences. Reformed Christians tend to be cerebral, cool and analytical. Charismatics promote enthusiasm, “letting go,” and warm feelings.⁴²⁴

But, despite these differences Hesselink sees compatibility between the traditions even a mutually complementary relationship.

First, Hesselink affirms a strong focus on pneumatology in each. Both put significant emphasis on the person and work of the Holy Spirit. He actually argues the Reformed tradition at its best is superior in its pneumatology:

I am convinced that in Reformed theology there is a greater appreciation, deeper understanding, and more comprehensive and balanced presentation of the full power and work of the Holy Spirit than in any other tradition, including the Pentecostal tradition!⁴²⁵

He traces this focus on the Holy Spirit to the writings of Calvin and acknowledges many Reformed churches have neglected this aspect of their tradition.

The question arises as to whether the Reformed churches have been aware of and faithful to this magnificent theology of the Holy Spirit developed by Calvin. Unfortunately, the answer, for the most part, has to be No. In the seventeenth century a scholastic orthodoxy on the one hand and a one-sided

⁴²⁴ I John Hesselink, “The Charismatic Movement and the Reformed Tradition,” in *Major Themes in the Reformed Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 377.

⁴²⁵ Hesselink, 378.

pietism on the other dealt crippling blows to Calvin's balanced presentation of the work of the Spirit. These two movements were followed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by a literalism that talked much about "spirit" but which knew little of the biblical understanding of the Holy Spirit.⁴²⁶

He cites multiple examples of Reformed scholars and church leaders who adequately carried the torch of what he sees as Calvin's rich pneumatology.⁴²⁷

It is in this tension of a rich theological tradition, but neglected praxis on the part of Reformed churches and the opposite in Pentecostal-Charismatic movements that Hesselink suggests a compatible, mutually beneficial pairing of these traditions. He is wary of neo-Pentecostals who, dismissive of the Reformed tradition, slip into errors the likes of which MacArthur highlights. His solution, like MacArthur, is valuing the role of doctrine—particularly Reformed doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

Genuine, true doctrine and theology will produce good fruits. Conversely, authentic, wholesome Christian experience can only flourish if it is undergirded by and issues from evangelical truth.⁴²⁸

Similarly, Reformed polity is seen as an excellent structure within which to place the experiential emphasis of Pentecostal-Charismatic praxis. As a metaphor, Presbyterian order provides the banks for the river of Charismatic praxis. Presbyterian polity, in its ideal form, functions democratically with shared leadership, multiple layers of accountability and checks on power. Thus, methods for minimizing excess and individual abuse of power are in place.

Like others, Hesselink overlooks the significance of contextual praxis. He centres reconciliation on resolving theological or doctrinal differences, skimming over deeper differences between the traditions. As such Hesselink's critique is dated and narrow. Two important points must be made about Pentecostal-Charismatic theology

⁴²⁶ Hesselink, 380.

⁴²⁷ I John Hesselink, "The Charismatic Movement and the Reformed Tradition," in *Major Themes in the Reformed Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 383.

⁴²⁸ Hesselink, 381.

missing in Hesselink's reflections. First, as JKA Smith argues, Pentecostal spirituality and with this Pentecostal theological reflection is rooted in different presuppositions and tends toward a different methodological style and focus. These differences have a profound impact on efforts to integrate the traditions. Second, over the last three decades in particular, Pentecostal theological reflection has engaged significantly with academic theology, resulting in a blossoming body of literature addressing all manner of theological debates and methods related to Pentecostal history, theology and praxis. Hesselink's critiques do not account for this.

Hesselink does touch on a view held by some in the Reformed tradition: the traditions are complementary in their strengths and weaknesses. This is the motivation behind leaders and church communities who endeavour to shift entire congregational cultures to become more Reformed Charismatic. They envision a hybrid aimed at keeping Reformed doctrine, methodological approaches and polity while integrating the passion, power and experience of Pentecostal spirituality.⁴²⁹ Practitioners Rich Nathan and Ken Wilson argue in their book *Empowered Evangelicals* it is possible to have the best of both:

We can, for example, experience worship that includes "spirit and truth," heartfelt intimacy, and thoughtful biblical exposition. We can pray for healing, believing God will heal, and still leave room for God to be God. And we can hear God's voice and feel God's leading, yet still respect God's Word as the ultimate source of revelation.⁴³⁰

Similar efforts are visible in the work of Presbyterian Reformed Ministries

International (PRMI), an organization established as a resource and refuge during the

⁴²⁹ For examples see the work of James Jones, an Episcopal clergyman and professor of history and theology: J.W. Jones, *Filled with New Wine: The Charismatic Renewal of the Church* (Harper & Row, 1974). Also, Ean Carlin gives an example of someone coming from a stereotypical Reformed culture positively addressing Charismatic theology in: D. Ean Carlin, *Reformed and Charismatic* (Scholar's Heart Press, 2013).

⁴³⁰ Rich Nathan and Ken Wilson, *Empowered Evangelicals: Bringing Together the Best of the Evangelical and Charismatic Worlds* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Vine Books, 1995), 15.

turbulent decades of the Charismatic Renewal. Their stated purpose is to “equip believers to advance the Kingdom of God through Holy Spirit empowered ministry”.⁴³¹ Today it is comprised of a team of leaders who travel to various Reformed congregations presenting a Reformed Charismatic theology and praxis that highlights complementary strengths of the two traditions and mitigates conflicts. Functioning as a non-profit, independent organization they see their role as working alongside the church to support and equip those in the Reformed tradition with an historically, theologically, and biblically informed praxis in areas such as “spiritual warfare” and demonic deliverance, physical and inner healing, prophesy and other revelatory gifts.

22.5.3 Carver T. Yu and ‘Intellectualism’ Versus ‘Emotionalism’

For Carver Yu, Charismatic theology and praxis addresses an important need in society. He sees in postmodernity a “triumph of subjectivity” over “functional rationality”⁴³² resulting in social fragmentation and personal identity crisis. For Yu, Charismatic theology and praxis has addressed this through focus on immanent divine presence and activity. Reformed theology, in contrast, has resources to address such a crisis, but is hampered by an overly rational objectivism.

As suggested, Yu frames the differences between Charismatic and Reformed traditions through the lens of a subjective-objective paradigm. The Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition is the height of subjective religion whereas Reformed theology has erred on the other extreme. Yu argues instead for a middle ground found in a Reformed understanding of human-divine covenant relationship.

The theological magnetic center of the Reformed tradition is the sovereignty and glory of God. Reformed spirituality is thus directed away from the self to the glory of God. The spiritual anchor is on the objective reality of God’s

⁴³¹ www.prmi.org.

⁴³² Carver T. Yu, “Charismatic Movement, Postmodernism, and Covenantal Rationality,” in *Reformed Theology [1]* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2003), 157.

sovereignty and grace. Faith, the personal coordinate of salvation, is grounded on, determined by, and directed toward this objective reality. This anchor has to be held onto fiercely, for it is the hope with which the church and the world may weather this raging storm of narcissism and relativism.⁴³³

Because of God's holy otherness and sovereignty, his objectivity, Yu argues a certain subjectivity is required in covenant relationship with humans. Practically, we know God through personal experience. God is not limited by human understanding nor beholden to any subjective self-interest.⁴³⁴ Right doctrine alone is not enough.

Experiential knowledge of relationship with God is needed--a subjectivism that has a real impact on everyday life.

the point is, modern man feels deprived and marginalized in a fundamental way; it is his humanity that is at stake. When we dismiss the [Charismatic] movement as biblically and theologically unsound, we need to ask ourselves: How should we help the church understand the Holy Spirit in such way that it is open to his work and power, so that the world may know the glory of God at work in us?⁴³⁵

Thus, like Hesselink, Yu sees a complimentary union of Reformed and Charismatic theology, wherein the Charismatic restores experiential knowledge of covenant relationship with a transcendent God and Reformed theology keeps this subjectivism from narrowing to a focus on certain spiritual, ecstatic experiences and a narcissistic goal of fulfilment of one's own personal self-interest.

Yu here is touching on a major critique of Charismatic praxis from within the Reformed tradition. Alongside concerns Charismatic experience is over-emotional and a product of social manipulation, there is concern Charismatic theology is superfluous, an ethereal projection of one's own personal interests and preferences. At the root of these critiques is a desire for certain objective norms and an epistemology that doesn't sound so subjective. Whether such a rational, objective understanding is available, or

⁴³³ Yu, 160.

⁴³⁴ Yu, 163.

⁴³⁵ Yu, 165.

as Yu argues even desirable and sufficient, it is a flash point of tension between the two traditions.

The tension comes to the fore when the traditions differ considerably in their ethics and praxis. For example, Central Presbyterian is a highly affluent congregation. While there is a disparity of wealth among congregants, the church is located in one of the wealthiest communities in the world. While there are diverse theological views related to personal wealth, the majority view is moderate. No sermon will demand one must sell all one's possessions, nor is there an overt affirmation of a prosperity gospel associated with Pentecostal theology. A message framed around the dangers of wealth and need for generosity is much more at home at Central Presbyterian. Reverend Dale, as the senior leader, receives a six-figure salary, but drives a dated, utilitarian family vehicle and lives in a comfortable but not in anyway ostentatious home. As one congregant explained, "no preacher should be driving a luxury car and wearing thousand dollar suits"⁴³⁶. Were the senior leader to purchase status items his salary could easily afford, the concern, or the community's theological critique, would be he has elevated his self-interest over God's. Stated in Yu's framework, he would have elevated his narcissistic subjectivity over a more trustworthy rational-objective understanding of God's character and will.

Yu's concern about hyper-rationality in the Reformed tradition was also echoed in interviews with Reformed Charismatics. Jay described his own personal journey through a process of 'head' knowledge to experiential 'heart' knowledge. He once attended a Presbyterian church where the focus of sermons was intellectual understanding of the biblical text and faith. After a move to a new city, Jay began attending Central Presbyterian and noticed a slight shift. Intellectual understanding

⁴³⁶ Interview with "Dave," June 2016.

was still highly valued, but alongside practical application through service to others and emotional, relational understanding. Initially, this ‘heart’ understanding was uncomfortable for Jay. He occasionally prayed, occasionally read the bible and when convenient attended Sunday worship services. He was comfortable donating money to help support efforts to serve the wider community, but personal relationship with God was more foreign. Jay was convinced any experience associated with Charismatic spirituality was fabricated by individuals or manipulated by leaders. So, while growing more comfortable with relating to a deity who loved him personally and related to him individually, he was in for a shock when deciding to volunteer in the youth ministry of the church. He described a line of what he was comfortable with and the youth ministry didn’t just invite him to step across the line, but “threw me over the line”⁴³⁷.

In an interview he described one particularly significant weekend while on a leader retreat. He had been volunteering in the youth ministry for over a year, but some of the Charismatic praxis he was least comfortable with was not part of the weekly programs he helped lead. While on the weekend away everyone was encouraged to receive prophetic prayer. This type of prayer involved two people listening for God’s perspective about the recipient. Often in a fairly informal way, three people sit together, two praying, one receiving. The expectation is God will speak directly to those administering the prayer, but the recipient must discern what is from God and not. Prophetic prayer is meant to be edifying. There is no language of “Thus says the Lord”. It is not staged in a large group gathering with a speaker prophesying over members of the audience. Instead it is private, personal and non-confrontational. There may be pauses in the conversation as those administering ‘listen’ for what God is saying, seeking to detect thoughts or mental images attributed to God. The prayer time

⁴³⁷ Interview with “Jay,” October 15, 2017.

is often recorded on an audio recording or in writing and given to the recipient to aid in further discernment. Jay was sceptical of this form of prayer, having already concluded it was simply an exercise in human perception and projection. He expected “fortune cookie” type details, general enough to apply to anyone, such as ‘God loves you’ and ‘God wants you to trust him more’. But, those praying described details specific to Jay, specific to his private thoughts and concerns he had not shared with his fellow volunteer leaders. This, as Jay described, was encouraging and puzzling simultaneously, and opened him up more to God interacting with people through these practices.

Later that evening after a time of teaching, youth ministry leaders conducted “impartation prayer”. Those administering the prayer usually place their hands on the recipient and expect God will impart whatever God has already given to the one administering the prayer. The group of thirty volunteer youth leaders were standing around the room as the pastor and two others walked by praying for each. Jay was positioned in the back taking it all in:

I’m not really buying this. Every time I see this on TV it is a show, people are coached, you fall down and do the things. Other people were falling down in the room and it confirmed my scepticism because not everyone was falling down. It didn’t seem like it was going to happen. Someone touched me on my chest and it was like this bursting in. I can’t explain it, but beyond anything I’ve experienced before. It was this uncontrollable joy that came over me. My knees were getting weak, I was fighting it and my legs gave out. That made me just laugh even harder. It was that combination of joy I was experiencing and this ridiculousness that as sceptical as I am this is happening to me. There are moments where it is stopping or slowing down, then I have a picture of Jesus standing over me saying ‘you know you are under the ping pong table’ and I open my eyes I’m under the ping pong table. So I let go. It was confirmation that God wanted me to experience this more.⁴³⁸

Similar experiences have continued for Jay and become a normal part of his spirituality.

⁴³⁸ Interview with “Jay,” October 15, 2017.

Intellectualism is also the primary characteristic Terence used to describe Central Presbyterian. His family has been part of the church for almost twenty years. For a brief period they attended another congregation Terence enjoyed because it was more experiential, relational and praxis focused than Central. In Sunday school classes this other congregation helped their teenage daughter with real life issues, like a discussion about dating and relationships. Sunday school at Central Presbyterian seemed to him to be just that: school. Children were asked to read a passage from the bible and think about it through a series of study questions. Terence, when he led a Sunday school class, focused conversation on everyday life experiences engaging children on what they were dealing with that day or relevant questions they already had. He also observed how worship services, meetings and other relational settings were constrained by “tight timelines, lets get it done”. The other church they attended temporarily,

was more hey, tell me a story, if it takes three minutes and it goes off script that is okay. It was incredibly moving--not like people speaking in tongues on stage or other Charismatic phenomena, but a real desire to connect personally and relationally with Jesus.⁴³⁹

But, despite his style preferences Terence and his family remained at Central Presbyterian because of close personal relationships.

Asked why he thought Central Presbyterian was so intellectual, efficient and orderly, Terence theorized it had to do with the personality types dominant in the congregation and wider community.

You have a lot of engineers. Things have to make sense, they have to be logical, they tend not to be touchy feely people, so structure of services, timing, everything has to have a point. The larger community is really engineering heavy.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁹ Interview with “Terence,” November 10, 2017.

⁴⁴⁰ Interview with “Terence,” November 10, 2017.

Terence's assessment is informed by his role as an attorney at a large technology company where he works primarily with software engineers. He frames it as different preferences and needs. Hence, from his perspective, "you can't force it," you can't make people be something they are not or are not comfortable with. "It has to be a genuine." As a result, he feels constrained when at Central Presbyterian as someone who prefers things a different way than the majority of the community. But, he noted, it is not a big enough issue for him to leave Central. He feels supported, particularly as a member of the inner healing prayer team, and connected relationally.

Brody, however, after fifteen years eventually chose to leave Central Presbyterian because of intellectualism and what he perceived as a lack of focus on the Spirit. Originally from an independent church background, Brody and Sharon started attending Central Presbyterian because of relational connections. There was also hope, based on their initial impressions of the church, that maybe "it won't be as Presbyterian as we think". However, Brody described himself as frog in a pot:

So the frog was boiling slowly. The trend from where [Central Presbyterian] started went back to being more Presbyterian. I probably should have left five to six years ago. I tried to relate and I tried to make it work. But the church was going in a totally different direction. I was not interested and concerned if I stayed I would be disappointed and critical.⁴⁴¹

Over the last year he has been attending another large church in the city more associated with Charismatic theology and praxis. But it was really the intellectualism Brody focused on as a distinguishing factor:

The difference between guys I related to a [Central Presbyterian] versus [current church] is guys at [Central] read the Bible to get an intellectual understanding of what it says, with Barclay's commentary. [Current church] guys are asking how do I relate to this and what does this say about how I relate to my wife, kids, how does it challenge me--personal application. Like, how do I relate to people at work who think I'm crazy?

⁴⁴¹ Interview with "Brody," November 5, 2017.

Like Terence, for Brody it was personal application and a common desire for a practically lived out faith that distinguished the churches' praxis.

Also, Brody highlighted what he perceived as a gradual decrease at Central Presbyterian in even mentioning the Holy Spirit, let alone guidance about spiritual praxis. The watershed moment in his account was a sermon on Acts 2 in which the associate pastor preaching made no mention of the Spirit. Focus was entirely on being a community of people that supported one another. For Brody, it was too much, or better said too little. The combination of intellectualism, lack of practical application and discussion of the Spirit compounded by not finding like-minded relationships culminated in a search for a new church community.

22.5.4 Myung Yong Kim and Ecumenism

Brody's critiques are addressed in part in Myung Yong Kim's comparison of Pentecostal and Reformed pneumatology. He highlights five key emphases in Reformed pneumatology:

- 1) The Holy Spirit unites adherents to Jesus Christ through revealing Christ, inspiring faith, justifying and regenerating identity and status in relationship with God.
- 2) The Holy Spirit sanctifies adherents to become like Jesus Christ.
- 3) The Holy Spirit's work goes beyond personal, individual salvation to include shaping human history and the natural world.
- 4) The Holy Spirit testifies to Christ and illuminates doctrines and sacred texts through an inner witness.

- 5) The Holy Spirit works through the church, as the body of Christ, making the Spirit's invisible work visible.⁴⁴²

Reformed pneumatology, argues Kim, makes a close link between the Spirit and the "Word". The "Word" is often framed as the bible but can include other forms of proclamation, like preaching. There is less room for enthusiasm in faith expression and "subjective prophecies that are often discovered in Pentecostal churches."⁴⁴³

Kim also highlights five positive emphases in Pentecostal pneumatology:

- 1) Pentecostalism offers an important corrective to the "spiritual neglect of traditional churches"⁴⁴⁴:

Pneumatology in the Reformed tradition gradually lost its importance. [...] creeds and confessions of the Reformed tradition do not do justice to the biblical emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit, and the result is that in reading what the Bible says about the Spirit we are blind and deaf [...] the result is the danger of a rigid church.⁴⁴⁵

For Kim, Pentecostal emphasis on the spontaneous activity of the Spirit and continuation of spiritual gifts are helpful in correcting the Reformed tradition.⁴⁴⁶

- 2) Pentecostal focus on being filled with the Holy Spirit brings a healthy vitality to the church. Being filled and empowered by the Spirit is an important addition to the Reformed emphases of justification and sanctification through the Holy Spirit.⁴⁴⁷

- 3) Pentecostalism addresses real world present need. The Spirit changes current circumstances related to physical bodies, financial circumstances and

⁴⁴² Myung Yong Kim, "Reformed Pneumatology and Pentecostal Pneumatology," in *Reformed Theology: Identity and Ecumenicity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 170–73.

⁴⁴³ Kim, 172.

⁴⁴⁴ Kim, 176.

⁴⁴⁵ Kim, 174.

⁴⁴⁶ Kim, 175.

⁴⁴⁷ Kim, 177.

more in concrete ways. However, Kim also critiques Charismatic theology for neglecting certain real world issues, pain and suffering.

4) Kim affirms Pentecostal belief of speaking in tongues, but rejects its soteriological significance.

5) Pentecostalism offers a needed counter to the influence of liberalism and rational “anti-supernaturalism”:

If the faith is merely rational, it is possible that the scientific worldview may replace it in the long run. The place on which faith stands becomes ever narrower, and eventually the church dies.⁴⁴⁸

However, Kim is also concerned about excesses in Pentecostal-Charismatic praxis. He critiques overemphasizing certain spiritual gifts over the Holy Spirit moving through natural gifts. He notes the presence of inauthentic signs, miracles and spiritual experiences and peculiar claims to knowledge and insight. Kim also expresses reservations about Pentecostal definitions of power, which may minimize the power of love demonstrated through suffering, a similar critique to Bruner’s above.

Kim and interviewees perceptions were generally the same: Reformed praxis related to the Holy Spirit is limited as compared to Pentecostal-Charismatic praxis. However, Pentecostal-Charismatic praxis is challenging to accept fully based on preferred theological norms. So, like Kim, these ordinary theologians attempt to craft a hybrid theology and praxis better suited to their preferences. While Kim’s method aligns with academic theology, dominated by comparative analysis of pneumatological perspectives, the methods of those interviewed is much more pragmatic; a process of finding what works for them in their particular ecclesial context. Their ‘ordinary’ ecumenism involves theological reflection and biblical interpretation, but in diverse, ad hoc and anecdotal forms.

⁴⁴⁸ Kim, 178.

The disciplined detail and rigor of Kim's approach is more akin to bilateral ecumenical dialogues among scholars and denominational leaders. A significant example was the dialogue between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and Pentecostal scholars and church leaders.⁴⁴⁹ From 1996-2000, representatives from WARC and a small, select group of Pentecostals met for one week each year to address theological debates between the traditions. Their goal was to enhance understanding by highlighting agreement, precisely distinguish differences and to identify common practical initiatives at a congregational level. Academic papers were presented and discussed. They worshipped together and visited specific churches as part of their meetings.

Yet, it is debated the extent ecumenical efforts in this form impact the practical realities of Reformed Charismatics and their congregations. At a minimum they signal the potential for unity. They advance the cause for accurate understanding. They also provide theological resources and possibly even practical principles for practitioners and ordinary theologians to use in their specific contexts. But none of the Reformed Charismatics interviewed referenced the WARC dialogues or similar ecumenical efforts. Their process of ecumenism, again, is more pragmatic, pulling from aspects of the theology and praxis of each tradition and testing it personally and within the congregational norms of Central Presbyterian.

22.5.5 J. Rodman Williams and "Special Revelation"

J. Rodman Williams expressed raw enthusiasm about the historical significance of the events surrounding the Charismatic Renewal of the 1960s-1970s.

What we behold in this present movement of the Holy Spirit is, I believe, a recurrence of the primordial power of the New Testament church. Something is happening today that is more than just one possible renewal among many; it is

⁴⁴⁹ "WARC Dialogue," <http://pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj8/WARC.html>.

rather a coming to expression of primitive vitality due not to natural forces but to the operation of the Holy Spirit. It thus has vast potential for deep renewal of the church throughout the world.⁴⁵⁰

Trained in the field of systematic theology, Williams integrates Reformed and Charismatic theology in various publications and articles, but most comprehensively in a volume entitled *Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective*.⁴⁵¹ One example of this weaving of traditions is highlighted below around the divisive topic of revelation.

Staying well within traditional categories, Williams affirms core Reformed perspectives. God is a mystery, human understanding is limited due to sin and finiteness and so any accurate knowledge of God is dependent on God granting it. He highlights traditional views of “general revelation” available to all through the natural world/creation, historical events and humanity as created in the image of the divine. He also discusses “special revelation” only available through Old Testament texts, Jesus Christ and the apostles. In a nod to cessationist concerns, Williams states “God’s special revelation, which focuses on Jesus Christ, was rounded out and given final shape only through the apostolic witness.”⁴⁵² But Williams continues beyond these two traditional categories:

In addition to the special revelation that is completed with the apostolic witness, God reveals Himself to those who are in the Christian community. This revelation is subordinate or secondary to the special revelation attested to in the Scriptures.⁴⁵³

This ongoing revelation is very similar to MacArthur’s concept of illumination. For Williams:

⁴⁵⁰ J. Rodman (John Rodman) Williams, *The Pentecostal Reality* (Plainfield, N.J.: Plainfield, N.J. : Logos International, 1972), 30.

⁴⁵¹ J. Rodman (John Rodman) Williams, *Renewal Theology : Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996).

⁴⁵² Williams, 41.

⁴⁵³ Williams, 43.

This revelation, centered in the Word made flesh, was prepared by the ancient prophets and completed by the early apostles. There is *nothing more to be added*: God's truth has been fully declared. Accordingly, what occurs in revelation within the Christian community is *not* new truth that goes beyond the special revelation (if so, it is spurious and not of God). It is only a deeper appreciation of what has already been revealed, or a disclosure of some message for the contemporary situation that adds nothing essentially to what He has before made known.⁴⁵⁴

"Subordinate revelation" is an elaboration of "special revelation" primarily to allow specific application in contemporary contexts. Where Williams departs from MacArthur is his embrace of the various mediums of "subordinate revelation". For MacArthur illumination is limited to insights about the biblical text. Williams embraces forms like prophecy or more spontaneous and experiential insights attributed to knowledge granted by God, so long as it results in the "upbuilding of the Christian community"⁴⁵⁵.

Again, missing in MacArthur's argument and now Williams' is adequately addressing epistemological issues related to interpretation. Williams frames all reception of divine revelation as limited by the constraints of human understanding. However, whether reading sacred texts or receiving insights attributed to the Holy Spirit through various spiritual practices, there is still the substantial influence of presuppositions and cultural paradigms on interpretation. This issue is often central to ordinary theological debates about divine revelation, although articulated differently. 'How can I tell it is God talking and not just me and my own thoughts and concerns?' 'Even if I believe God is speaking to me (offering "subordinate revelation") how do I accurately interpret and practically act on it?'

In terms of debates about sources or mediums of divine revelation, those interviewed at Central Presbyterian did not limit God's leading to illumination of the

⁴⁵⁴ Williams, 44.

⁴⁵⁵ Williams, 44.

biblical text. There were forms of divine communication preferred over others, discussed in more detail below. That said, none were comfortable elevating their personal experience above the bible. Scripture, although viewed in different ways and interpreted through diverse methods and frameworks, was still authoritative and the primary source of divine revelation.

23 CONCLUSION

Two concluding remarks from this dialogical overview of the Reformed and Pentecostal-Charismatic traditions:

- 1) Along with the overwhelming degree of diversity within each respective tradition and their various contextual congregational praxis, there are striking differences between Reformed and Pentecostal-Charismatic theology. These distinctions go beyond difference in form, style and doctrinal emphases to include different foundational epistemological frameworks, all influencing the more obvious distinctions in praxis.
- 2) These differences limit the value of theological reflection and biblical interpretation in resolving debates and addressing practical ecclesial situations. This is not to question the relevance of academic theology; although there is a notable disconnect between Reformed scholarship and ordinary theology. More at issue is the influence of different interpretative frameworks. This is highlighted above in Grudem's work, but evident throughout the scholarship cited in this chapter. Differing perspectives can look at the same data and come to, at times radically, contrasting conclusions.

What does all this show us? Additional methods may be needed to describe Reformed Charismatics. Reformed Charismatics themselves may need other tools and paradigms to navigate their ecclesial contexts. The next chapter explores one possible

avenue for further insights, by putting Reformed Charismatic ordinary theology in dialogue with social scientists and theologians utilizing ethnographic methods in practical theology.

Chapter 6: **Reformed Charismatic Ordinary Theology in Dialogue with Social Scientific Research**

Every approach to comparing Reformed and Pentecostal-Charismatic theology and praxis, and the tensions between them, has strengths and weaknesses and inevitable dissolves into complex, nuanced diversity. This impacts any effort to make general or normative claims about Reformed Charismatic identity and spirituality. And, per the central question of this research project, it impacts analysis of Pentecostal influence more broadly. As described already in addressing methodology, a way forward is focusing on one particular context, in this case one Presbyterian congregation and the Reformed Charismatics within that congregation. Accessed through ethnography, ordinary theology is put in dialogue with scholars and practitioners providing a broader perspective. And, rather than restricting dialogue to only systematic and biblical theologians, this chapter interacts with relevant social scientific research and theo-ethnographic analysis.

Others have utilized similar methods in exploring Charismatic theology and praxis. Reference has already been made to Miller's work on "new paradigm" churches.⁴⁵⁶ Significant studies by Neitz and Csordas have focused on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.⁴⁵⁷ A growing body of literature is utilizing ethnography to explore Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in the majority world. However, social scientific analysis of Reformed Charismatics in the United States is limited. Two

⁴⁵⁶ Donald E. (Donald Earl) Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism : Christianity in the New Millennium* (Berkeley, Calif.: Berkeley, Calif., 1997).

⁴⁵⁷ See M.J. Neitz, *Charisma and Community: A Study of Religious Commitment Within the Charismatic Renewal*, New Observations (Transaction Publishers, 1987). See also Thomas J Csordas, *Language, Charisma, and Creativity : The Ritual Life of a Religious Movement* (Berkeley: Berkeley : University of California Press, 1997).

works stand out. Stephen Warner, in exploring major shifts in American religion, studied a Presbyterian congregation in Mendocino, California during the 1970s.⁴⁵⁸ Charismatic influence is present at the church and is featured in his analysis. However, as noted below, Warner's research is focused on American religion more broadly and specifically the liberal-conservative divide common in sociological frameworks at the time of his study. Also, the Reformed Charismatics Warner encountered were influenced by the "Jesus movement"⁴⁵⁹ and wider 'hippie' alternative culture trends making them markedly distinct from those at Central Presbyterian. The other significant work is Tanya Luhrmann's analysis of whom she identifies as "experiential evangelicals".⁴⁶⁰ Luhrmann is not studying Reformed Charismatics per se, but her description of the spirituality she encounters at two Vineyard congregations is strikingly similar to those at Central.

Before turning to the work of these scholars, Poloma and Cartledge's analysis of norms at Pentecostal and Charismatic congregations are utilized to explore the ritual of weekly corporate worship at Central. Corporate worship at Central is distinct from common styles in Pentecostal-Charismatic congregations; however, the distinctions are not as stereotypical as they may first appear. Theological debates become more nuanced in praxis as reflected in the ways Reformed Charismatics adapt to tensions that outsiders, even ethnographers, and the majority of the congregation may overlook.

Focus then turns to Warner's theories related to nascent subcultures as a way to frame Reformed Charismatic influence at Central Presbyterian. Again, it is difficult to make general, normative statements, but Warner's theories of the nascent versus the

⁴⁵⁸ R. Stephen Warner, *New Wine in Old Wineskins : Evangelicals and Liberals in a Small-Town Church* (Berkeley: Berkeley : University of California Press, 1990).

⁴⁵⁹ See R.A. Bustraan, *The Jesus People Movement: A Story of Spiritual Revolution among the Hippies* (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2014).

⁴⁶⁰ Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back : Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*.

institutional highlight ways many are experiencing Pentecostal influence at Central.

Specific examples, like an earthquake decision and starting a deliverance ministry, are used to further illustrate the experience of Reformed Charismatics and their impact on the wider congregation.

The chapter concludes with descriptions of Reformed Charismatic spirituality in interaction with Luhmann. Luhmann's theories clarify unique dynamics present in Reformed Charismatic belief and praxis important in understanding Pentecostal influence. Reformed Charismatics also push back on Luhmann's theories related to the complexity of communal formation. Luhmann studied Charismatics who were in the theological majority of their church. Reformed Charismatics provide an example of a similar spirituality, but as a minority theologically confronted with scepticism and resistance, rather than communal affirmation and support.

24 THEOLOGICAL NORMS THROUGH RITUAL WORSHIP

In describing the theology of a congregation there are many places to look and listen for themes, norms, narratives, symbols, rituals and praxis. A church as large as Central Presbyterian, as already discussed, presents even more variables for the researcher. There are differing perspectives and preferences united together in one larger social group. Identifying these various perspectives, their distinctions and commonality is a challenge.

Reverend Dale noted how challenging it is to lead in the midst of theological differences in the congregation. He offered the example of preaching in the midst of a particularly divisive national political climate. A recent election brought political disagreements, while always present, to a fever pitch. Dale has become painfully aware of a lack of shared language and meaning among the congregants. It is difficult to get through a sermon without putting one half (or all) of the congregation on edge,

even unintentionally. He recently preached on humility, primarily using illustrations from his own life and never once made reference to politics or national social issues. Yet, his e-mail inbox afterward included unsolicited feedback regarding the political commentary congregants heard in his sermon. Dale described one congregant leaving in the midst of the service itself with a face flushed red with anger, grabbing an usher and venting his frustration that the sermon was a clear diatribe against the current U.S. president.

As will be discussed more below, there is diversity among Reformed Charismatics themselves. There was a different style of Charismatic praxis within the youth ministry under my leadership than in the various prayer ministries directed by Pastor Tonya. Norms in the youth ministry, and how this was reflected in rituals of prayer, changed upon my departure. While remaining Charismatic, it became markedly more contemplative in style, reflected by the leadership preferences of my successor. Then, after his departure, Charismatic praxis ended entirely and the youth ministry returned to mirroring the spirituality of the wider congregation.

In the midst of all this diversity, there is one place where all gather together: Sunday corporate worship services. They present an opportunity to get a handle on the wider congregation of Central Presbyterian and particularly the context within which Reformed Charismatics operate. To aid in analysis, observations of Central Presbyterian Sunday worship are put in dialogue with ethno-theological conclusions offered by Cartledge on worship services at Charismatic congregations and those of Poloma in a wide ranging study of Assembly of God churches.

24.1 The Different Sunday Corporate Worship Services

Central Presbyterian has attempted to resolve the ‘worship wars’ of the modern church by having both styles simultaneously, in separate locations. Two separate full-

time worship leader positions are dedicated to the services in each venue respectively. One specializes in classical music and traditional hymns, directing the various choirs, organists and other musicians, facilitating a more traditional Reformed liturgy. The worship leader in charge of services in the gymnasium specializes in leading rotating bands playing praise songs with electric guitars, drums and various vocalists in a more stripped down, casual Reformed liturgy. The band never plays in the sanctuary and vice versa the choir never sings in the gym.

To the discerning eye the liturgies are similar in structure emphasizing corporate expressions of praise through singing, statements of confession and absolution of sins, opportunities for sacraments depending on the Sunday, corporate prayers of intercession, scripture reading and an identical sermon. The timing and logistics of the services are organized to allow for the preaching pastor in the 9am service in the sanctuary to depart this service early (through a door offstage) during a prayer or hymn, walk over to the 9:45am service in the gymnasium already in progress and take a seat in the front row while the band is playing. After preaching in this service the preaching pastor returns to the sanctuary in time for the start of the 11am service. During the 9:45am service the sermon is recorded and played back as a video for the 11am service happening simultaneously in the gymnasium. The preaching pastor then preaches the same sermon for the last time that evening at the 6pm service in the community centre.

There was a time when pastors wore robes in the sanctuary and would remove them when preaching in the gymnasium. Robes are no longer worn in any service, but it is common for male preachers to remove their sport coats and ties when preaching in the gymnasium and put them back on for the sanctuary sermon. This dress code, although not enforced, is reflected also among congregants attending the respective

services. Casual dress is the norm (and a cup full of coffee) in the gymnasium and more formal attire in the sanctuary (and no outside beverages—not even water).

Reformed Charismatics interviewed expressed a mix of opinions about the difference between the services. Some, like Pearl, found the traditional services constraining. Pearl, whose background includes substantial time in Pentecostal churches, tried to be clear the issue wasn't the hymns or other more formal stylistic elements. Instead "the atmosphere of the contemporary worship is more open to the feeling of the Spirit"⁴⁶¹. That said, some Reformed Charismatics find the volume of the music in the gymnasium painful to their ears and prefer the services in the sanctuary.

Gary gave a more precise description in articulating his surprise how significantly he experienced divine activity in the sanctuary. He, like Pearl, was raised in a Pentecostal church. His childhood church was also marked by ethnic and age diversity.

My first Sunday at [Central] I didn't know the modern worship building even existed. My friend was going to go to a black church, but we went to [Central] and were overwhelmed by how white and old it is. But, during the service the pastor comes up and gives a commission for all creative types.⁴⁶²

Gary and his friend stood to receive prayer alongside others in the creative arts. The pastor encouraged those sitting nearby to 'lay hands' on those standing and led the congregation in prayer.

We felt the power of God fall on us as they prayed. I knew it was my church. It was nothing like my home church, but I just knew God said 'this is your church'.⁴⁶³

Others describe similar experiences of divine presence and activity in the sanctuary services despite the formal worship style.

⁴⁶¹ Interview with "Pearl," November 17, 2017.

⁴⁶² Interview with "Gary," November 11, 2017.

⁴⁶³ Interview with "Gary," November 11, 2017.

24.2 Adapting to Majority Theological Norms

Regardless of which service they attended the majority of Reformed Charismatics described adjusting how they expressed themselves in response to congregational norms. While no one could recall a situation in which someone was directly told to cease a certain activity during a service, they did relay reports of complaints after the fact. One man in particular is known for shouting an occasional “amen” or “hallelujah” during the sermon in the sanctuary. Reverend Dale has received e-mail complaints that his “verbal outbursts” are distracting, but Dale disagrees. A Reformed Charismatic on Session also relayed reading notes from a worship committee meeting expressing complaints about people raising hands while singing hymns in the sanctuary.⁴⁶⁴ For most the greatest fear is disapproving glares and indirect expressions of judgment.

Some speculate this is due to the professionalism of the worship services. As Meg stated,

I have issues with Presbyterian rules and perfection of the service. I have a hard time going to sanctuary services because I’m critical of the level performance of the service.⁴⁶⁵

Terence, as described in the previous chapter, attributes it to the intellectualism of the congregation. “very intellectual...let’s read a passage and parse and I’m a little frustrated about it”. Terence also noted the “tight timelines, lets get it done”⁴⁶⁶ structure of the services. He would prefer more space to allow relational connection even if it means the service lasts longer. He described feeling constrained, needing to

⁴⁶⁴ Interview with “Lori,” August 2, 2017.

⁴⁶⁵ Interview with “Meg,” August 4, 2017.

⁴⁶⁶ Interview with “Terence,” November 10, 2017.

be more reserved when expressing himself. Or as Robbie recognized, there is a need to “curb his enthusiasm” when in worship services.⁴⁶⁷

Ryan, an associate pastor at Central Presbyterian for over two decades, attributed this to the Reformed tradition itself.

It is so word focused--teaching and reading scripture. I think we train ourselves. It is almost like we are two dimensional when I contrast one of our worship services with what I see at independent Charismatic churches and even Orthodox. They are more of a fuller, multi-emotional experience that enables people to engage God in a fuller way.⁴⁶⁸

Reverend Dale highlights the need for predictability and control. Even practices that are not necessarily Charismatic, but are new and unstructured can make people uncomfortable. He invited the congregation to do an exercise symbolizing receiving God’s forgiveness during the sacrament of communion. Congregants had the option to go to an area of the sanctuary and get a piece of dissolving paper, write sins they needed to confess and place it in a bowl of water and watch it dissolve. He knows of members of Session who intentionally skipped the service that Sunday to avoid having to do this.⁴⁶⁹

It is common for Reformed Charismatics to adjust words, actions and preferred religious experiences to fit communal norms. Some describe it as a minor issue, but for others it proves a major struggle. Gary recounts,

I feel alot of frustration having to hold back my expression of worship. I want to throw my body on the floor, I want to shout in the sermon: ‘Amen’. I want to fall on my face and cry because of how you have forgiven my sin. This is time for me where I don’t have to have it together based on how I grew up. [In the church I grew up in] the messiness of life was more out there, but at [Central Presbyterian] it is more polished and put together. My struggle has been having to be put together to come to church.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁷ Interview with “Robbie,” November 15, 2017.

⁴⁶⁸ Interview with “Ryan,” November 16, 2017

⁴⁶⁹ Interview with “Dale,” November 27, 2017.

⁴⁷⁰ Interview with “Gary,” November 11, 2017.

All have found ways to work around differences in praxis. “If I felt like I needed to speak in tongues I did it in a hushed whisper, internally”.⁴⁷¹ Or for Gary, he makes intentional choices when he will break from norms framing it as a choice whether to “disobey God or disobey leaders”. Some have decided to leave the church altogether or found smaller groups or other churches to visit with different norms.

24.3 Central Presbyterian vs. Charismatic Corporate Worship Service Ritual

Cartledge suggests there is a basic pattern to Charismatic worship services:

This begins with praise, moves to prayer and the ministry of reading and hearing the Scriptures preached, followed by prayer over and for the people via ‘altar calls’ or ministry times. The outcome of such encounters with the Spirit is transformation of the person in some way (edification, healing, cleansing, empowerment). Of course, these phases overlap and blur into each other, but the basic pattern is clear enough.⁴⁷²

He places this liturgical rhythm within wider patterns in Charismatic spirituality. There is an on going process, Cartledge suggests, of “search – encounter – transformation”⁴⁷³. And within each Charismatic corporate gathering there is an intentional effort to lead congregants through this process.

Transformation is in the minds of the organizers and participants of Central Presbyterian worship services. It is Reverend Dale’s stated hope that lives are changed through relationship with Jesus in ways that are practical in everyday life. Even some of the distinct characteristics of style in Charismatic worship services identified by Cartledge are also present at Central Presbyterian, particularly in the gymnasium services. For example, Cartledge notes the prevalence of contemporary music and informality of dress.

⁴⁷¹ Interview with “Robbie,” November 15, 2017.

⁴⁷² Mark J. Cartledge, *Encountering the Spirit: The Charismatic Tradition* (Maryknoll: Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006), 26.

⁴⁷³ Cartledge, 25.

However, it is not the norm at Central to expect encounter with the Spirit like in Charismatic congregations. More precisely it is not that interaction with God is discouraged or diminished, people are experiencing God even in surprising ways. It is the particular style and forms this ‘encounter’ takes. Spiritual manifestations often associated with Charismatic gifts such as prophesy, tongues, physical manifestations and the like are rare at Central. As Poloma notes in observations of Assemblies of God congregations, these displays of Charismatic praxis can be either noisy and raucous or more contemplative or quiet.⁴⁷⁴ At Central Presbyterian they are not encouraged or happening at all, in overt ways. If present they are hidden or reworked in communally accepted forms. For example, in the Reformed tradition prophecy is accepted in the form of reading and interpreting scripture and preaching. In a Charismatic worship service, the prophetic includes preaching, but additionally someone may be allowed to share what is framed as a spontaneous revelation from God. Individuals may give and receive personal prophetic words during times of prayer or even during informal conversations before or after the service.

That said, while no prophet will stand before the congregation and share a specific message at Central Presbyterian apart from the sermon, prophetic prayer is present. The preaching pastor may disguise a prophetic message in her sermon. It may be something shared with the preacher during sermon preparation intended to be prophetic. Or as described by multiple Reformed Charismatics, they operate in the prophetic gifts in various hidden ways. For example, Pearl shared a story, cited earlier, of what she described as God prompting her to say something specific to the person next to her at a Sunday service. Or Rachel, who often serves on the anointing prayer team, has a style of administering prayer in which she asks God for what God wants to

⁴⁷⁴ Margaret M. Poloma, *Assemblies Of God At Crossroads: Charisma Institutional Dilemmas*, 1st ed. (Univ Tennessee Press, 1989), 188.

say to a prayer recipient and tells them what she hears. Gary has found it easier to move in his understanding of prophetic gifts outside of worship services while people are sharing conversation and a cup of coffee on their way back to the parking lot. Similar examples can be given of speaking in tongues, physical manifestations, prayers for physical healing and the like. While not on overt display and openly encouraged as in a typical Charismatic worship service, they are still present at Central Presbyterian behind the scenes and out of sight.

A key element in Pentecostal-Charismatic worship services Cartledge and Poloma both highlight is the use of personal testimony. The themes, forms, time in the service, narrative shape of the testimonies and time allotted for them vary depending on the church and the setting. People are encouraged to remember their personal experiences of God and to share them with others often in the hope they too will experience the same or at least be encouraged by what is possible. Per Poloma,

Testimonies play an important role in most Assemblies of God congregations. All pastors in the survey reported having had testimonies of both salvation and healing in their congregations within the past six months. [...] Reports of conversions and healings believed to be the result of communal prayer are good material for testimony times and function in creating and maintaining Pentecostal reality.⁴⁷⁵

As described in the previous chapter, Central Presbyterian also puts a high value on stories, but in different forms and usually highlighting a different type of experience. Testimonies that emphasize experiencing God's provision or modelling commitment to serve God through serving others will receive more exposure than testimonies involving healings, signs and wonders. When these testimonies are communicated in corporate gatherings at Central Presbyterian it is rarely first person shared by the individual. Instead, it will show up as an illustration within the sermon. When a congregant is invited to speak publicly about a personal experience they are often

⁴⁷⁵ Poloma, 202.

required to submit a written manuscript for review and approval and when presenting are given specific parameters around time and content.

This in part may be attributed to the different forms of liturgical order at Central Presbyterian compared to Charismatic communities. Central organises their services well ahead of time and in the case of sanctuary services down to thirty-second increments. Each participant's role is carefully choreographed and all those who will be leading in the service meet several days prior to verbally run through the order of the service confirming details and timing.

Reggie, a staff member who regularly officiates during services at Central once worked on the staff of an independent Charismatic Vineyard church. He sees a trend at Central Presbyterian of "hiring a leadership style which is much more strategic, program driven, we'll solve this through better planning and ideas". By contrast,

In the Charismatic world, in my experience the trend is more toward strategic planning that is 'ready,' 'fire,' 'aim.' It is a trade off, you lose one thing and gain another. I want to figure out a blend.⁴⁷⁶

Lost for Reggie are opportunities to be more spontaneous and responsive to what may be happening in a particular moment during a worship service. What is gained, with Central Presbyterian's approach, is better preparation, better decisions and clearer communication. The blend for Reggie, is "Spirit led planning" by which he means incorporating an expectation that God, if allowed to, will shape the planning.

Similarly, Gary, also from a Charismatic church culture and also involved in officiating services at Central Presbyterian, just wants space, literal time, to have the opportunity to adjust the planned agenda for a service in the moment. He is aware what may appear spontaneous in a Charismatic worship service is actually a normal part of the liturgy and communal expectations. There is order to what may appear as

⁴⁷⁶ Interview with "Reggie," August 3, 2017.

chaotic and impromptu. For example, when the leader on stage at a Charismatic service invites congregants to share testimonies of healing or salvation, the congregant may first be required to come to a designated location off stage and have what they plan to share vetted by another leader who determines whether they will be allowed on stage. Then, if allowed to speak on the microphone, the leader on stage may never completely hand the congregant the microphone. Instead the leader will hold the microphone allowing the leader at any point to interject, edit or end the testimony. At the end of a particular set of worship songs at a Charismatic church, rather than making a tight transition to the next element in the service, the worship leader may move into a time of what is described as free flowing, spontaneous worship. Congregants are invited to sing their own songs, pray in tongues or other expressions of worship deemed normal within congregational praxis. While this does allow for individual expression and a democratisation of the corporate worship gathering, it is often for a period of time already set aside for such an experience. The exact details of the ten minutes of “spontaneous” worship may not be worked out, but it often includes common sights, sounds, activities and rituals. There are also certain forms of expression that congregants are allowed to do ‘freely’ and others they are not, all depending on the norms of the community.

That said, despite how ordered these apparently spontaneous moments are, they are rarely present in the services at Central Presbyterian. For someone to seek to add them in the moment, as an act of improvisation, is risky and discouraged. Gary himself has received negative feedback for extending prayer times to focus on specific issues he believed were impacting people in the congregation. For some his impromptu decisions are uncomfortable because they feel out of control. They know he is breaking from the normal pattern and aren’t sure what to expect, fearing it will be

awkward. For others it is simply a matter of logistics. The timing of each service is coordinated with the timing of the various other programs built around the set church service times. If the 9am service goes over the allotted fifty-five minutes, the preaching pastor may be late for the sermon in the 9:45am service. The children's education wing may end up with clogged hallways as parents coming into the next service attempt to drop off their children at the same time parents from the previous service are late picking up theirs. The traffic flow in the parking lot is also disrupted and the domino effect can build through the morning. If these spontaneous, improvised elements are not planned for and given an allotment of time, they can create substantial logistical challenges. So, it is in part an issue of style and in part a reality of a large church seeking to efficiently maximize limited space.

Aside from different uses and style of testimony and different forms of planning, Charismatic worship services are markedly distinct from Central Presbyterian churches in their central focus. As Cartledge argues, Charismatic spirituality centres on experience of divine activity and presence. Worship services are designed to encourage "encounter" with a personal, immanent divine being. Encounter with God, it is expected, will lead to a response of some kind, to transformation. Within the worship event there are a myriad of opportunities for encounter that culminate in an opportunity to practically respond at the end of the worship event. This can take the form of altar calls or "ministry time" such as coming to designated areas to receive prayers for healing, the prophetic or impartation.

The worship event at Central Presbyterian does encourage relational interaction between congregants and God. Church services are seen as part of a wider process of spiritual formation and transformation. There are also multiple elements in and around the service designed to encourage interaction. Music, art and media in various

mediums, the elements of communion and interpersonal interaction with other congregants are all part of a Central Presbyterian worship event. It is common for there to be a verbal call to worship in which the officiate invites congregants to personally relate with the divine in whatever way they feel comfortable. But, the expectation of what this encounter or interaction with the divine will look like is of course different.

The primary focus of the worship event at Central Presbyterian is the sermon and the music. Music, singing and preaching are all key and dominant in a Charismatic worship event as well. The difference, although it may appear subtle, is that in the Charismatic worship event these are all means toward encounter with the divine presence. At Central Presbyterian, in a sense, the means are the ends. This may be most evident in the absence of a substantial response time in any of the Central Presbyterian worship services. The one exception may be the 6pm evening service, which always includes the sacrament of communion after the sermon. Congregants are invited to come forward and receive the Eucharist elements and also have the option of receiving anointing prayer before the service concludes. The other Sunday services incorporate the sacrament and anointing prayer once per month. Missing in comparison to typical Charismatic services is the regular ‘altar calls’, ‘ministry times’ and other opportunities to respond within each service as part of the expectation of encounter and transformation.

25 REFORMED CHARISMATICS AND THE NASCENT

Due to these at times subtle but significant theological tensions and style differences, Reformed Charismatics fit well within Warner’s theories of the nascent state or movement. Warner’s work explores shifting national religious trends from what he describes as the country club social groups of mainline churches of the first half of the twentieth century to liberal social activism of the 1960s to conservative

evangelicalism of the 1970s. He focuses his ethnographic study on Mendocino Presbyterian Church during the 1970s. He saw in this church a microcosm of national trends and through participant observation, interviews and sociological analysis, Warner sought to explain why. Along the way he came across a particular version of Reformed Charismatics. Most relevant to this study are his conclusions about the interplay between what he labels as institution and nascent groups.

Warner defines the institution as “a complex normative pattern that is widely accepted as binding in a particular society or part of a society.”⁴⁷⁷ In the case of Central Presbyterian this is the theological norms and praxis of the congregation, as expressed for example in the rituals, style and behavioural expectations of the respective Sunday church services. Warner defines the nascent group as those for whom,

intermittent commitment to a taken-for-granted religious institution is not, however, sufficient [...] They continually try to up the ante of religious commitment, cajoling their fellow parishioners into higher levels of involvement and their ministers into more forceful witness.⁴⁷⁸

Warner identifies two key nascent individuals in the cultural shifts at Mendocino Presbyterian. Both were solo pastors during their respective tenures at the church.

The first man led the church in the direction of witness for social justice, and the church was never the same afterward. The second man brought a radically different message—a sustained course of Bible study and an ethical concentration on family life—that drew scores of recruits. [...] Each represented a point of collision between the old church and a newer religious social movement.⁴⁷⁹

Nascent individuals or groups have varying agendas but share a common desire to change the current institutional norms towards their preferences.

⁴⁷⁷ Warner, *New Wine in Old Wineskins : Evangelicals and Liberals in a Small-Town Church*, 23.

⁴⁷⁸ Warner, 27.

⁴⁷⁹ Warner, 29–30.

Warner directed his focus on Antioch Fellowship a group he frames as an evangelical nascent movement. Antioch and its leader were closely affiliated with the institutional church, but functioned as an independent entity. They held separate midweek communal gatherings, had their own budget and vision for ministry and subsequently a theology and praxis distinct to themselves. This included a mix of Charismatic spirituality with alternative lifestyle ('hippie') movements not uncommon in this area of northern California. Warner highlights stark contrasts between the norms of the institutional church of Mendocino Presbyterian and the spiritual and countercultural zeal of the small, but committed Antioch membership. This ranged from the casual dress and informality of the midweek Antioch worship meeting to the heightened ethical expectations and intensified spirituality that infused the divine into even the smallest details of daily life.

Those at Antioch, and particularly their leader, believed a part of their mission was to influence the theologically liberal majority of the main church. When a key opportunity presented itself Antioch leadership took strategic advantage. The liberal social justice minded pastor leading Mendocino Presbyterian left his position. Per Presbyterian polity the congregation appointed a representative group of members charged with searching for a replacement. Those on the special nominating committee had a disproportionate influence on the results of the search. Antioch Fellowship, using their connections and understanding of the nomination process, weighted the search committee in their favour. The result was hiring a conservative evangelical pastor who appeared on paper and interviews to be a leader who would make the institutional church more aligned with their nascent perspective. As Warner recounts, the church did change, but not in the ways the leadership at Antioch Fellowship had hoped.

Watching this clash of minority and majority norms within one church community, Warner observed several characteristics about the relationship between nascent groups and the institution. First, the nascent of today may eventually become the new institution.

The congregational singing, pulpit Bibles, well-dressed laity, and clergy title of “minister” found in stodgy Protestant churches today are symbols of a time when popular participation and mass literacy were aspects of the new and radical idea of the priesthood of all believers.⁴⁸⁰

It is debated what extent the nascent Reformed Charismatic subgroup has influenced the majority norms of Central Presbyterian. Such a process of routinization and institutionalization is clearly apparent in Reverend Dale’s efforts to shift the once self-focused country club reputation of the congregation to an externally focused service organization. Now over a decade on from the painful transformation process, the nascent movement of “serving the city” is the new normal of the institution and as initial enthusiasm has waned fatigue has set in. A new nascent initiative is gaining traction: being a welcoming community to outsiders. The social service initiative inspired non-church community members to attend Sunday services and other of the various programs at Central. These newcomers’ presence, touted as key goal of the social service programs, has exposed a weakness at the church. The congregation may do well in serving others, but not as well in sharing personal relationship with those they serve.

Warner’s second observation is that the nascent and institutional repel each other.⁴⁸¹ This has already been documented in the theological tensions some Reformed Charismatics experience and the conflicts arising from their praxis. Important to note, these tensions have more to do with differences in style and resistance to change than

⁴⁸⁰ Warner, 47.

⁴⁸¹ Warner, 48.

doctrinal differences. As mentioned, the build-up to hosting a weekend conference with speakers from Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship was filled with conflict. In all the e-mails received, various meetings with concerned parties and gossip, Reverend Dale only recalls one conversation grounded in discussing the theological issues at stake. Other conversations focused on what this meant for the church choir, would it be disbanded? What would happen to those who didn't experience God in these new ways? So, while the most vocal protestors, a relative minority in number, were willing to label Dale a cult leader to his face, it was based not on theological or doctrinal concerns, but the threat to 'the way we do things'.

This dynamic is also apparent among Reformed Charismatics who ultimately left or were asked to leave Central Presbyterian. While the conflicts were in the context of differences over Charismatic theology and praxis, it was often relational issues that caused the most harm. As described in the previous chapter, Kate "never felt challenged by the sermons, felt they were more 'you're a good person' and 'atta boy' keep being kind"⁴⁸². She preferred the preaching and praxis of another more Charismatic congregation in the community. She initially attended Central Presbyterian to help her parents connect to a church. Kate ended up being offered a role on staff, but clashes intensified. She wanted more focus on "Spirit led" planning of programs, was frustrated by the lack of prayerful engagement by other staff and often felt diminished by colleagues for her zeal. This came to a head when she was passed over for a promotion. However, for Kate, more than anything it was the way the hiring decision was communicated and the awkward relational dynamics with colleagues which led her to quit her position and leave the church entirely. She already

⁴⁸² Interview with "Kate," August 2, 2017.

knew congregational norms were not to her liking when accepting the staff position. She was willing to work through this. The relational strain and pain proved too much.

Darren had been walking the tension of being a nascent individual for years. He was very involved in the church, making significant contributions through his technological expertise. He found a home among the inner healing prayer ministry and was enthusiastic about sharing his testimonies of healings, signs and wonders. It was never clear in interviews with Darren or those knowledgeable about his situation exactly what happened, but he was told after a certain incident to never pray for anyone again on the church's campus. If he did so, according to Darren's account, the police would be called and he would be banned from attending the church altogether. Darren was unwilling to share specifics only to say it was all lies. He was convinced it was due to his efforts to encourage more openness to Charismatic experience, particularly physical healing. Most frustrating for Darren was a lack of clear communication from leaders and a possible path toward restoration. He tried several different ways to resolve the issue, but was unable to make any headway. Devastated, he left the church.⁴⁸³

The above examples fit well within Warner's theories about the nascent and institution. However, his framework doesn't fully acknowledge Reformed Charismatics *unwilling* to change the institution toward their preferences. While Rachel muses on the complacency of the average congregant at Central Presbyterian she is thriving in her involvement at the church. Likewise, Lori, while acknowledging she wants everyone to experience God in ways she has, is not willing to pressure anyone. She would prefer to make inner healing prayer an available option, but does not feel the need to promote it or actively recruit for it. While not fully satisfied with

⁴⁸³ Interview with "Darren," August 4, 2017.

the institutional status quo, such Reformed Charismatics don't feel it is their role to bring change, preferring instead to do a secret work that doesn't call unnecessary attention to themselves.

Third, Warner observed that the nascent may revitalize the institution and vice versa the institution sustain the nascent. Interestingly, Warner notes, this may be compromised if the institution and nascent become too similar. Warner points out such a dynamic between the main leader of Antioch Fellowship (Redford) and the conservative evangelical pastor (Underwood) called to Mendocino in the 1970s. The Antioch leader had a decisive role in calling Underwood to the position. As mentioned, he used some political manoeuvring to lead the pastor nominating committee to search for an evangelical instead of another liberal. But, when the conservative pastor took over Mendocino it ended up making things difficult for Antioch Fellowship. The new pastor, "was a self-conscious, sophisticated evangelical, neither, he would state when asked, a charismatic nor a fundamentalist"⁴⁸⁴ Antioch Fellowship, however, was all three. Under the new pastor's leadership, Mendocino and Antioch were in competition. As Warner describes,

Redford [Antioch's leader] and Underwood [Mendocino Presbyterian's pastor], though ideological allies in the evangelical camp, represented the opposing principles of social movement and social institution. Those who were drawn into evangelicalism in the past-time, pluralistic, worldly context could meet their religious needs in Underwood's church. Redford was left with only those whose evangelicalism was as intense, totalistic, and radical as his own. Since he lacked the personal magnetism to engender that kind of commitment in many others, he could only try to hang on to the followers he had as they gravitated toward Underwood and the institutional church.⁴⁸⁵

Under the prior pastor Antioch Fellowship complimented the once majority liberal church norms as an approved alternative. The institution even financially and

⁴⁸⁴ Warner, *New Wine in Old Wineskins : Evangelicals and Liberals in a Small-Town Church*, 170.

⁴⁸⁵ Warner, 236.

administratively supported the nascent Antioch group helping to sustain its existence and influence.⁴⁸⁶

This same dynamic is noticeable at Central Presbyterian. First, the institution sustains the nascent. There are many examples of this ranging from funding to use of facilities to providing a large congregation of potential new recruits. The inner healing and anointing prayer teams depend on the financial and administrative support offered Tonya, the associate pastor who pioneered these ministries. The Charismatic youth ministry was able to exist because of the families already part of the church, as well as the substantial infrastructure a youth ministry requires. While functioning like an independent Charismatic church, it depended on the wider institutional church and its approval.

Second, there are multiple ways the nascent Reformed Charismatics have revitalized the institution. Multiple pastors and leaders referenced how much they value the input of certain Reformed Charismatics. Some have gained a role and reputation as wise discerners of divine leading and activity. In specific instances their spiritual counsel is sought. Activities conducted by Reformed Charismatics are also appreciated by many in the institutional church. The inner healing prayer team receives referrals from congregants and leaders alike. Church leaders value the approved venues within the church for Reformed Charismatics to be validated and equipped. Meg, who organizes a monthly prayer gathering, has always felt the support of church staff and the congregation. Only a small group attend these meetings, but all are welcome and the times and locations are marketed on the church website and publications. As Terence frames it, Reformed Charismatics are a minority, but have a beneficial role:

⁴⁸⁶ Warner, 251.

The way I look at it though, it is kind of like the things that make things extraordinary is when you add things that don't belong and it fits. To make chocolate better you don't add more sugar. What makes it extraordinary, you add something that doesn't belong and it makes it better. Like cayenne pepper, inner healing prayer is like cayenne pepper. Like my job, God uses all my background from law to business development so I go to other countries to help them develop technology for their country. I'm the only lawyer on the team, the rest are engineers, but when I'm in the room things can happen with certain government officials with policy. Inner healing prayer doesn't fit in normal Presbyterian church, but it is the cayenne pepper.⁴⁸⁷

Reformed Charismatics are then not seen as a disruptive minority, but a differentiator in which there is power in the mismatch.

Third, to Warner's most striking observation, when the institution under Reverend Dale's leadership began to openly embrace Charismatic theology and praxis it created new tensions with nascent Reformed Charismatics. Charismatic praxis became more prevalent and accepted which for some was exciting and encouraging, but others disappointing. Ken describes frustration, "that it didn't take off more than it did. Thought it would grow more. It hit a glass wall, door, or ceiling. There was just a value system that was different".⁴⁸⁸ Akin to Warner's observations, there was a form of Charismatic spirituality with a lower level of intensity more appealing to the majority, but dissatisfying to certain nascent Reformed Charismatics.

Erin, a Reformed Charismatic volunteer in the youth ministry, was asked to be part of the nominating committee for a new children's pastor. This was actually a key role in nascent Reformed Charismatic efforts to integrate the isolated youth ministry into the whole church. If the new children's pastor was more open to Charismatic theology and praxis it could align these two complimentary ministries in a more sustainable way. Instead she encountered a continual clash of perspectives. Despite increased openness to the Charismatic under Reverend Dale, the dominant tone of the

⁴⁸⁷ Interview with "Terence," November 10, 2017.

⁴⁸⁸ Interview with "Ken," October 27, 2017.

committee, as Erin recounted, was the “same old looking for someone who is going to be really fun”. Erin wanted something more, “someone who will help them hear and know Jesus”. Frustrated and discouraged she ultimately left Central Presbyterian. For Erin, like Ken, “the value system mismatched and this was the people making decisions about leadership” which made it all the more substantial and proved “an insurmountable barrier”.⁴⁸⁹

25.1 Striking a Reformed Charismatic Balance: The Influence of Prophetic on the Earthquake Decision

In the autumn of 2015 a woman named Judy came to Central Presbyterian with a prophetic message of warning. Judy was a member of a different church in the area with relational connections to Central Presbyterian. She explained that God told her to tell all the pastors in the region a major earthquake was coming in the next year. She thought God wanted the pastors to work together and be ready.

Because of Reverend Dale’s close relationship with the pastor of Judy’s church, a meeting was arranged with Dale, the church’s head of finance Steve and Ryan, the associate pastor charged with the Central Presbyterian’s social service work. As Steve recounts “Judy was a wild eyed, crazy, direct, fire and brimstone, counter-culture personality. You want her to be spectacular and articulate. This was not Judy.”⁴⁹⁰ The three leaders were receptive but sceptical. Ryan is very open to the prophetic. He is genuinely earnest to discern divine activity and be obedient to it. But he was concerned: “We don’t want to come out sounding ridiculous, a lot of prophecies don’t come true. How can we do this in a way where we don’t look ridiculous?”⁴⁹¹ Dale was highly suspicious. He was particularly uncomfortable with Judy’s use of dates.

⁴⁸⁹ Interview with “Erin,” October 27, 2017.

⁴⁹⁰ Interview with “Steve and Sharon,” November 22, 2017.

⁴⁹¹ Interview with “Ryan,” November 16, 2017.

He was open to God speaking through a ‘prophet’, but timeframes were a red flag. He was also uncomfortable with some of the imagery Judy used and the tone of judgment in Judy’s theological perspective.⁴⁹²

Steve was the most intrigued by the prophecy. Six weeks prior, while in a worship service, a thought crossed his mind that seemed different than his own thoughts: “get your house in order”. Steve does not think of himself as a Reformed Charismatic. He has few experiences he has interpreted as God speaking to him. But, he shared this phrase with close friends and his wife who encouraged him not to ignore it. Steve has a heart condition and wondered if God was warning him to prepare for immanent death, putting everything in order to aid his wife. He updated his will, organized his finances and finished some projects on their house. Then, Judy, when presenting her prophecy, shared the exact same phrase, “God wants you to put your house in order,” but referring to earthquake preparedness and the church. This grabbed Steve’s attention, but he still struggled with how to discern. Making decisions wasn’t new, but discerning God’s leading and prophetic words from people like Judy was. So he did what he knew best, he tested it through corporate decision making with specialists.

Steve contacted the Reformed Charismatics he knew and trusted within the church and another group of Charismatics he knew outside of the church. He employed two deliberate strategies. He told one group what Judy said and asked them to pray about it. He didn’t provide the second group any detail about the prophesy or context for his request, just asking them to pray about what God was saying to Central Presbyterian. Steve recounted how members of the group who didn’t know any details reported hearing “earthquake, earthquake, earthquake” accompanied by visions about

⁴⁹² Interview with “Dale,” November 27, 2017.

people moving out of the city because nothing was left. Several of those who knew the details of the prophecy felt, based on prayer and experience with divine communication, “it was from God and not in left field”. Some had similar visions about an earthquake years prior to Judy’s prophesy. A group met together in Dale’s office two weeks after Steve’s prayer assignment to discuss and discern corporately. One shared a bible story “God highlighted” from Genesis, when Joseph was prime minister of Egypt. It was the same scripture “God had shown” another at the meeting. “Joseph was in a position to help prepare people. That is what we interpreted.”⁴⁹³ Joseph also happened to be Steve’s favourite biblical character. This was all helpful confirmation for Steve. “It included scripture, similar interpretation from people we did know and people we didn’t know.” So at the conclusion of a two-month vetting process he decided, “if you are going to move into the unknown and put your weight down, let’s put our weight down on it as true.”

Not unlike Joseph in Egypt, Steve was positioned in his role at the church to do the most about earthquake preparedness. He oversaw the budget for the entire church and all the facilities. He also had the trust of his colleagues and members of the congregation with a reputation of being a wise, cautious and responsible leader. He was aware Dale and Ryan’s scepticism along with the many demands on their schedule would result in little action. So, Steve and his wife Sharon took the lead.

A key factor in the discernment was scientific projections that affirmed the prophesy. Seismologists have warned for years the region was due for a massive earthquake. However, scientific timelines were much broader. It could happen any moment or sometime in the next 200 years. Judy’s prophesy created a greater sense of urgency and alertness.

⁴⁹³ Interview with “Nan,” April 20, 2017.

Earthquake preparedness was a low risk decision for Dale. It fit the church's vision of serving the community. City officials already shared with Dale the need for an earthquake shelter. Officials were aware of the scientific data, but did not have a sense of urgency or budget surplus to allocate toward preparedness. Central Presbyterian, as a local community non-profit, proved the perfect solution for the city's needs. The activities involved in getting a community ready for an earthquake also resonated with Dale's vision for evangelism. Federal earthquake preparedness officials developed a program based on connecting neighbours together to coordinate local plans. This required mapping the neighbourhood, developing a communication plan if telephones and cell phones were down, how to support each other in case of injuries or fire and emergency personnel could not be called on or were delayed. For Dale this was a practical way to mobilise congregants to serve their neighbours. It could also open relational doors for future invitations to religious activities and conversion. Earthquake or no earthquake, the process of getting ready alone was worth it to Dale.

The scientific evidence also proved crucial in communication with the wider congregation. As Ryan recounted "the urgency is because of prophesy. Science helps us communicate it." It was particularly important to Dale they "minimize the prophetic to the masses". This was in part to honour cultural differences: "The prophetic was not language we use in Presbyterian church. It would be dismissed."⁴⁹⁴ Or put more bluntly by Ryan, "the challenge is communicating this to a community that doesn't all believe in prophesy." However both Dale and Steve expressed concern they were minimizing the prophetic due to of their own lack of belief.

Reformed churches in general are known for prioritizing planning. Central Presbyterian's approach coupled with the church's resources takes initiatives like this

⁴⁹⁴ Interview with "Steve," November 22, 2017.

to a whole other level. Steve talked to twenty different churches in the area. They spoke to experts on preparedness and produced podcasts available on the church website. The website is also filled with a wealth of resources from various government organizations and the scientific community. They mobilised the congregation with materials and plans to lead coordination in each of their neighbourhoods. They converted the church to a disaster preparedness centre with 200 beds, 12,000 meals and enough water to sustain several hundred people for thirty days isolated from outside assistance. This included receiving a \$50,000 grant for a generator and purchasing satellite radio equipment to make the shelter a communication hub. Government officials recognized them for their work. The Federal Aviation Association invited Steve to lead seminars on preparedness. Media outlets came with camera crews to document the results. Federal officials visiting the church said it was the best prepared non-profit they had seen on the entire west coast of the country.

Judy identified a three-month period at the end of 2016 into the first part of 2017 when the earthquake would occur. By the time I conducted interviews, it was over 6 months past the deadline and no earthquake. For her part Judy said it was delayed because of God's mercy, but was still coming. For Steve, when asked what it was like to have the prophetic timeframe pass: "I needed counselling". He wanted to live into the prophecy and have it be a story glorifying God, demonstrating divine existence and activity in a concrete way. When the original prophetic timeline expired, this was diminished. "There is a mourning going on, but we feel bad because it means we wanted an earthquake." To Ryan's concern about looking ridiculous,

I don't feel ridiculous because it is just a matter of timing. All it says is she [Judy] didn't hear the right wording around timeframe. I know that we went to different people and others agreed, so there is community validation. I would have felt ridiculous if we would have pushed this out to the community and it

was just on one woman's prophetic word. The measured communication, corporate discernment and science all helps.⁴⁹⁵

Dale never accepted the prophetic timing. He based his decisions on other factors that in his assessment made the risk worth it.

The congregation had mixed reactions and interpretations. Some aware of the prophetic element, wanted more information about what Judy was saying. Judy, according to Steve, "went quiet for a little while". Others wanted to know what to do now. Ryan recounted how the preparedness had "created a lot of panic". When the timeframe passed one woman from a young mothers group in the church asked Ryan, "now what?" Ryan is concerned they didn't adequately lead the congregation, leaving congregants to interpret themselves. Some have concluded either Judy was a false prophet or more broadly this confirmed prophecy doesn't exist. Steve relayed how some interpreted the prophecy figuratively, as symbolic of something other than an earthquake. For now they stay prepared, but not at the same level of urgency or vigilance. "We've taken glass dishes out of boxes and put them back on the shelf."⁴⁹⁶ And in a positive assessment, Steve appreciates how many ways they experienced God through the process of preparedness and the many positive opportunities which resulted.

The whole episode demonstrates the dynamic interplay between the nascent Reformed Charismatics and institution at Central Presbyterian. While they clash and repel each other, they also co-exist and support one another. There is scepticism, different preferences related to style and significant confusion. Simultaneously there is openness, acceptance and mutual dependence. Reformed Charismatics are turned to as specialists in a particular time of need; yet, they are given measured and limited

⁴⁹⁵ Interview with "Ryan," November 16, 2017.

⁴⁹⁶ Interview with "Steve," November 22, 2017.

influence. And in a potentially ironic paradox, Charismatic spirituality and scientific analysis are placed in a complimentary relationship affirming similar projections and inspiring like action.

25.2 Not Allowed In: Deliverance

Demonic or spiritual deliverance ministry is a complex topic. Generally defined, Christian deliverance ministries attribute various mental and physical maladies or circumstances in life to the presence and activity of malicious spirits. Demonologies vary, as do the diagnosis of symptoms attributed to their activity. Again, generally speaking, demons are viewed as non-material personal beings like angels but aligned with Satan's agenda of opposing divine activity primarily through the deception and torment of humans. Deliverance ministry is focused on stopping demonic activity, primarily through casting out demons from those who are being negatively impacted by them.

There is diversity about how spiritual activity, and specifically demonic activity, is understood at Central Presbyterian. It is difficult to decipher an official doctrinal perspective as it is so rarely discussed or systematically addressed. Reformed Charismatics serving on the inner healing prayer team adopt a working demonology described in a metaphor of rats to garbage. Rats in this analogy are demons. If you have a problem with an infestation of rodents, you can try to kill the rats, but new ones will return if you don't comprehensively address what they are attracted to. The garbage in this analogy is a complex combination of beliefs and relational and emotional wounds which give demons authority or permission to deceive and harass humans. If this garbage is cleaned up and removed, the rats have nothing to feed on and will go away. Practically they believe in the activity of demons, but don't address demons or demonic activity directly. Instead, as will be described more below, inner

healing prayer focuses on beliefs and prior emotional pain influencing distorted views about oneself, God and the world. As these “inner” issues and beliefs are addressed, it is believed deliverance from any demonic activity will happen as a result.

As for the majority of the congregation, demonic activity is rarely discussed. For example, Nan recalls one sermon in her sixty years at the church in which a story was told about demonic activity. The preacher was an interim pastor and he recounted an experience while on staff at a different church in which he prayed and cast a demon out of a person. He framed the story as he experienced it. It was new for him, he didn’t know what to do, but in his confused attempts he saw results and transformation. Nan noted not only how rare it was to hear a story like this from the pulpit, but also how shocking and controversial it was for the congregation to hear. Many may prefer psychological explanations for symptoms some attribute to demonic activity. One must look behind the scenes to find deliverance ministry at Central Presbyterian. And the form it takes is often holistic, therapeutic and decent and in order.

Sharon, however, has come to different conclusions about deliverance ministry. While from a Pentecostal-Charismatic church background, she has been a member of Central Presbyterian for over fifteen years. She is an active participant in the various prayer ministries at the church, but felt the need to expand the church’s engagement and understanding of deliverance ministry. This required outside resources and leadership, which she found in an independent itinerant ministry led by pastor Bob. Bob is described on his website as “the world’s foremost expert on cults, the occult, and supernatural phenomena”.⁴⁹⁷ He has published at least thirty-four books on the subject, runs a training school and travels extensively teaching on and administering his style of deliverance ministry.

⁴⁹⁷ www.boblarson.org

Sharon, under Bob's leadership, is currently partnering with another trainee in the region to provide regular deliverance prayer. They allowed me to sit in and observe two separate sessions each lasting several hours on a weekday afternoon.⁴⁹⁸ They were held in a small room at a Presbyterian church in a neighbouring city. The sessions began with Sharon and her colleague Tom reviewing pages of notes from an intake form each "client" filled out prior to the session. The questionnaire covers a variety of topics focused on the client's experiences, relationships and other background information seen as relevant in diagnosing demonic activity. It is an extensive diagnostic process that continues with interviewing the client as Tom and Sharon try to solve the unseen mystery of what the demons are and how they are "gaining access". The more specific and accurate their diagnosis, it is believed, the more thorough the deliverance. As the session progresses, and especially when they sense they have a key to unlock what is happening, they will directly engage the demonic verbally. At times this requires an aggressive confrontation and the use of various ritual symbols utilized to exert spiritual power.

The first 'client' was a husband and wife. The wife was receiving deliverance prayer. They had received extensive prayer in previous sessions and although seeing fleeting signs of change had yet to experience resolution of the symptoms they attribute to demons harassing her. She was also receiving psychiatric treatment.

Tom, at various points in the session, moved his chair closer to the woman and leaned forward until they were nearly touching knees. The tone of his voice changed from calm, gentle and consoling. He looked the client directly in the eyes and at a firm pitch just below yelling called the demon to address him directly. While doing this he firmly placed a bible and at other times a thirty centimetre tall cross on the client's

⁴⁹⁸ Participant observation of deliverance sessions, August 4, 2017.

shoulder, then her back and her knee. The demon “manifested” when the focus was particularly on an emotional relationship with a particular priest. A conversation ensued in which Tom directly addressed the demon and the demon directly addressed Tom through the woman. Her voice deepened and accent changed. Contortions affected her face and neck, as it appeared she was resisting against someone choking her. The rest of her body slowly writhed. Every time Tom moved the bible or cross like a sword to a different part of her body she reacted in pain at the point of contact. After continued efforts to cast the demon fully out of her body, Tom sat back in his chair and changed the tone of his voice. The client physically relaxed and her voice returned to its normal tone and accent.

After further conversation and counsel Tom and Sharon speculated about what they thought was happening, but were clear they were not sure. They recommended the couple organize a session with Pastor Bob who was more experienced and skilled. He may be more effective in diagnosing and praying. The couple was open to this option, but struggled with the financial and logistical challenges of traveling to Bob and the cost of his specialized one-on-one prayer sessions.

The second session was with a first-time client. She was desperate for freedom from the tormenting voices, painful skin condition and other negative consequences she attributed to demonic activity. Sharon and Tom conducted a thorough interview exploring the past history of the woman’s relationship with family members, her medical history, current relationship with her husband, past abuse, trauma, drug use and interactions with other religious systems. The client was forthcoming with very detailed information, not wanting to leave any possible demonic access point uncovered. As the session shifted to prayer, Tom attempted to directly confront the demonic. However, in this session nothing “manifested”. The client was clearly

disappointed. After the more confrontational, aggressive prayer practices, Tom moved his chair back, shifted to his calm, gentle voice and he and Sharon spent the rest of the session doing their best to give her assurance that her experience was common, it can take time and it is a long process. The client was comforted somewhat by the opportunity for further sessions. They gave her a specific topic to focus on for the next time they met, asking her to compile a list of phrases her husband says to her that trigger fights. The session closed with the team anointing her with “holy oil” from a small vial attached to Sharon’s necklace and praying for healing.

Sharon initially asked to do the deliverance ministry at Central Presbyterian. Fellow members of the inner healing prayer team encouraged her “to go through the proper channels.”⁴⁹⁹ This meant getting the approval of Daria, the associate pastor overseeing the various counselling and prayer ministries at the church. The issue of getting pastoral approval arose frequently in conversations with Reformed Charismatics. They all understood it was a necessary part of any activity they did at Central. While Presbyterian polity democratizes power into the shared hands of the members of the church, everyone agreed staff support was crucial in getting things done. However, they were also well aware of the politics involved. Daria had a reputation for not being open to Charismatic theology and praxis. But working around her to get the support of a pastor who was more approving could cause problems.

Sharon had a meeting with Daria and another member of staff. She came with extensive written resources giving detailed information about the theology and approaches used in the deliverance ministry. They listened politely and said they would take it through the proper channels and would get back to Sharon. They never followed up. Several months later, a friend of Sharon’s on the inner healing prayer

⁴⁹⁹ Interview with “Sharon,” August 4, 2017.

team, as an elder, contacted Daria and found out it wasn't approved. She relayed this to Sharon. To this day she has never heard from Daria about it. "I think I freak her out." Sharon wasn't surprised. "Some of it is just a generational thing of people being open. Some of it is people's background, like Daria's background is Lutheran. This was all about Jesus and he will open and close the doors."

Sharon had already begun looking for other locations to host sessions. But, before starting the ministry it was important to Sharon to run it by Dale. Sharon understood herself as under Dale's spiritual authority as a member of Central Presbyterian and wanted his approval. She waited a long time to talk to Dale so it didn't look like she was going behind Daria's back. Eventually, after a Sunday service, she told him what she wanted to do and asked for the "spiritual covering" of her pastor. He agreed and prayed for her. She was relieved. If he said 'no,' "it would have been a deal breaker".

Pastoral staff were not the only ones divided about Sharon's style of deliverance ministry. Other Reformed Charismatics were uncomfortable with her methods, wanting to keep it at all at arms length. Deliverance ministry was one thing, but Pastor Bob's style and some of his other approaches to fundraising and marketing were problematic. Lori, head of the inner healing prayer team, attended one of Bob's conferences with Sharon:

Bob is theatrical. I could sense real spiritual warfare at the conference, but are you going to get your news from National Inquirer [a tabloid paper], or the Times [a respected news publication].⁵⁰⁰

Sharon is sensitive to their opinions and feels isolated not just from the majority at Central Presbyterian, but Reformed Charismatics as well. At this point no one from the

⁵⁰⁰ Interview with "Lori," August 2, 2017.

church has joined in the deliverance ministry. “It can be lonely when you don’t have people supporting it and think you are crazy.”

But, Sharon has persevered, encouraged by Bob and others outside of Central. She had trouble initially getting a room. At first, they found a spot at a public library, but had to try to “keep it low key”. Sharon recounted one session they knew the client would “manifest demonically”. They took him to a car in the library parking garage as far away from people as possible because of the noise. “It got very animated and intense and ten demons came out of him.” It is clear when listening to Sharon, she is sensitive to other people and people’s perceptions. Eventually they found a meeting location through connections to a Presbyterian church in a neighbouring city. This church has a senior pastor who is very open to spiritual warfare and himself performs a form of deliverance ministry. They offered Sharon a room to use, but no further administrative or financial support. For Sharon, “it is ironic I ended up in a Presbyterian Church.” However, at the time of my observing their sessions, this senior pastor was leaving the church. Sharon is now wondering if they will again need to relocate.

Sharon’s experience fits well within Warner’s theories of the tension between the nascent and institution. Her version of deliverance prayer even made the Reformed Charismatics at Central appear institutional. The differing views repelled each other to a point they could not co-exist under the same roof. Though distinct, Sharon’s style of deliverance ministry proved too similar to the inner healing prayer ministry and other forms already present at Central. Rather than providing a sustainable, complimentary mismatch, Sharon’s proved the outlier and was forced to literally be an outsider.

Sharon’s experience also demonstrates the complex layers of institution and nascent in a congregation like Central’s. Were Daria more receptive, like both Dale

and the senior pastor from the Presbyterian church in the neighbouring city, Sharon may have been allowed a place at Central. Likewise, as mentioned, nascent Reformed Charismatics engaged Sharon as though they were institutional. Thus, there are layers to the institution and the nascent in a congregation like Central. Rather than a linear, sequential process of change over time, nascent and institution can fluidly shift depending on the particular circumstances at issue in the moment.

26 REFORMED CHARISMATIC SPIRITUALITY

Attention now turns to describing Reformed Charismatic spirituality itself, as a unique example of Charismatic belief and praxis. Luhrmann, in her book *When God Talks Back*, seeks to “explain to nonbelievers how people come to experience God as real”.⁵⁰¹

However are sensible people able to believe in an invisible being who has a demonstrable effect on their lives? And how can they sustain that belief in the face of what skeptical observers think must be inevitable disconfirmation?⁵⁰²

Utilising an interdisciplinary approach of psychological anthropology, Luhrmann spent two years with a Vineyard congregation in Chicago and another two with a Vineyard congregation in California. Vineyard churches, most known for the founder John Wimber’s impact, are an independent Charismatic denomination. Through ethnography and with special attention to neurology and psychology, Luhrmann argues congregational like she encountered introduce experiential evangelicals⁵⁰³ to a new theory of the mind and take them through a learning process that changes their

⁵⁰¹ Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back : Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*, xv.

⁵⁰² Luhrmann, xi.

⁵⁰³ Luhrmann aptly calls it “experiential” evangelical Christianity, straying away from terms like ‘Charismatic’ and ‘Pentecostal’.

experience of their mind.⁵⁰⁴ Luhrmann's detailed description of this learning process is evident in the praxis I encountered with Reformed Charismatics. However, Reformed Charismatics don't fit neatly into her theories, particularly her understanding of the influence of community formation.

Luhrmann's theory rests on a basic presupposition: there is a hard and fast division between our minds and the external world. Internal, private thoughts are entirely separate from the external, natural world that we interact with through sensory data. One must intentionally overcome, Luhrmann argues, the basic understanding that our internal mind and thoughts are private.

Newcomers soon learn that God is understood to speak to congregants inside their own minds. They learn that someone who worships God at the Vineyard must develop the ability to recognize thoughts in their own mind that are not in fact their thoughts, but God's. They learn that this is a skill they should master.⁵⁰⁵

This requires new interpretive tools, training and communal support. Through the process new neurological pathways are formed which intensify one's perceptions. As a result these private thoughts become stronger, more substantial, making what is interpreted as spiritual beings and activity even more emotionally and palpably real.

Prayer then is a process of paying attention to internal experience and interpreting it to gain knowledge about divine activity.⁵⁰⁶ All Reformed Charismatics interviewed described such a process. No interviewee, for example, described hearing God's voice audibly, as sound waves deciphered through one's sense of hearing. Visual experiences were never described as actual light waves evident to one's sense of sight. All sensory data was internal. God's voice was heard as a thought, but in various ways distinct from one's own thoughts. Spiritual activity was seen as images

⁵⁰⁴ Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back : Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*, xvi.

⁵⁰⁵ Luhrmann, 39.

⁵⁰⁶ Luhrmann, 158–59.

in one's mind or imagination. Physical sensations, while experienced as if another being was in close proximity touching one's skin, were never recounted as if another being was tangibly present stimulating one's sense of touch. Language of hearing, seeing, feeling were used readily, but when asked for more precise detail the voice, the image, or even bright light and the physical phenomena were all internal.

This is also evident in the training some Reformed Charismatics referenced. Trainees are told it is rare to audibly hear or physically see God. Instead they are instructed to tune into their thoughts to decipher what God is saying and doing. One may be encouraged to sing the "Happy Birthday" song to oneself silently and internally. Or trainees are invited to imaginatively picture the front door of their residence and to go through the door and walk around inside, focusing on what they are able to "see". Similar to the way they are "hearing" the familiar song and "seeing" the familiar location, they are taught this is the way God often speaks--in and through their minds.

None of those interviewed expressed reservation or doubt God was capable of reading an individual's private thoughts. They were not troubled by the clear distinction Luhmann makes between internal and external sensory stimuli. This fit within the theological parameters of what was considered possible for a sovereign creator God with immense power. Nor was it necessarily a concern one perceives God's communication through their thoughts and imagination rather than through physical senses. However, to whatever degree God did have the ability to read our minds and our minds to hear God, the primary concern among Reformed Charismatics was how to tell. Many, but not all, expressed trouble knowing when it was God and not just their own private thoughts.

26.1 The Impact of Absorption

This dependency on internal sense data is a challenge for many in a church like Central Presbyterian. Some go through the learning process, seeking to embrace this theory of mind, and don't have the promised experiences of divine activity. Luhrmann noticed this at Vineyard congregations as well. Some seemed to experience God more readily and easily than others. She links this disparity in experience to the degree one is predisposed to being absorbed with their internal senses. Utilising results from Tellegen's absorption scale,⁵⁰⁷ a psychological test developed to measure one's tendency to become absorbed in many areas of ordinary life (not specifically religious), Luhrmann found a correlation between an individual's absorption level and their reported spiritual experiences.

when you get absorbed in something, it seems more real to you, and you and your world seem different than before. That is why it is related to hypnotizability. Both rely upon your ability to throw yourself into something and then to involve yourself intensely in the experience.⁵⁰⁸

The higher the absorption score the more likely an individual experienced God as interactive, personal and real.

Lori, a Central Presbyterian Reformed Charismatic, described how much prayer involved awareness, or put simply paying attention.

A lot of it has to do with whether I am aware. Am I putting myself in a position to be aware? When I'm more intentional about taking time to just be with God rather than rushing around and doing things, I probably experience it more than when rushing around.⁵⁰⁹

This "awareness" through "paying attention" is what Luhrmann is referring to with absorption. For Lori this practically looks like extended time reading scripture and "just being quiet". Luhrmann argues this process of paying attention changes one's

⁵⁰⁷ Luhrmann, 199–202.

⁵⁰⁸ Luhrmann, 199.

⁵⁰⁹ Interview with "Lori," August 2, 2017.

mind, enhancing over time one's ability to pay attention to what one is paying attention to. And in so doing what one is paying attention to itself is experienced more easily, requiring less focus, as it becomes more substantial, more real.

26.2 The Impact of Interpretation

As argued throughout this project, all data, whether internal or external, is interpreted data. Some at Central Presbyterian may have internal sensory experiences, but for various reasons do not interpret it as knowledge about divine presence and activity. As such, how one interprets has a profound impact on spiritual experience.

Per Luhrmann,

Knowing God involves training, and it involves interpretation. Each faith—to some extent, each church—forms its own culture, its own way of seeing the world, and as people acquire the knowledge and the practices through which they come to know that God, the most intimate aspects of the way they experience their everyday world change. Those who learn to take God seriously do not simply interpret the world differently from those who have not done so. They have different evidence for what is true. In some deep and fundamental way, as a result of their practices, they live in different worlds.⁵¹⁰

Multiple Reformed Charismatics described the process of their own shift between these “different worlds”. For some, experiences they once dismissed later became affirmation God had always been speaking to them without recognizing it. While recalling always being aware God was talking to her, it wasn't until Connie became part of the youth ministry that she started really understanding God's voice. Prior experiences she was unsure of were affirmed as normal ways God speaks and she accepted conversational communion with God as an everyday reality.⁵¹¹ This new perspective required a new interpretation of what those thoughts, impressions and sensations really meant.

⁵¹⁰ Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back : Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*, 226.

⁵¹¹ Interview with “Connie,” November 17, 2017.

26.3 The Impact of Training

Luhrmann, in an effort to further explore her theories around absorption and the impact of training, conducted an experiment utilising three different control groups. After intake assessments, in part based on Tellegen's absorption scale, volunteers were divided into three groups. Each group was instructed to listen to a specific set of recordings daily for a month. The first group listened to lectures in New Testament studies. The second group's recordings focused on apophatic centring prayer, encouraging meditation on one word while removing all other thoughts or distractions by listening to 'white noise'. The third group's recordings were kataphatic prayers, predominantly in the form of imaginative, guided scripture reading encouraging multi-sensory, personal engagement with the stories. Luhrmann designed the kataphatic recordings to be akin to training in absorption practices.

Results suggested the kataphatic prayer group had more spiritual experiences and sharper imaginative skills than the other groups. The apophatic prayer group reported the second most experiences, although also the greatest struggle in completing the exercises. The New Testament lecture group reported the least awareness of spiritual experience. Those with a predisposition toward absorption, as indicated by higher initial absorption scores, reported more experiences on the whole, such as a hearing a voice when alone, regardless the recording group. And those in the kataphatic prayer group reported more spiritual experience regardless of prior absorption scale scores. These results echoed Luhrmann's observations of the types of prayer practices and training prevalent in the two Vineyard congregations. "It seemed to me that prayer was

an absorption practice, and prayer training was really training in the skill of absorption.”⁵¹²

Similar absorption oriented training was evident in interviews with Reformed Charismatics at Central. Interviewees spoke of imaginative prayer practices involving interacting with God and spiritual beings as if they were in the room. Some regularly practiced the very spiritual exercises Luhrmann highlighted in her kataphatic prayer recordings rooted in the Ignatian tradition. There was a clear emotional content to their spirituality. They experienced being loved, feelings of joy, peace, as well as courage and empowerment all attributed to God.

26.4 Discerning God’s Voice

Learning to distinguish and then interpret God’s thoughts as separate from one’s own proved a key concern for Reformed Charismatics. Interviewees highlighted various influences, methods and indicators they used to discern.

26.4.1 Submission, Trust and Acceptance

For Darren, submission is the key to learning to hear God’s voice. “As long as we are willing to submit to him he can use us. If we are defiant it doesn’t work.”⁵¹³ Similar language of learning to trust, have faith, accept the unknown and mystery were repeated throughout interviews. For example, one of the stated requirements communicated to recipients of inner healing prayer is they must surrender to God and what God is doing. If they surrender God always “shows up” and works. If they resist, the prayer proves ineffective.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹² Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back : Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*, 202.

⁵¹³ Interview with “Darren,” August 4, 2017.

⁵¹⁴ Interview with “Lori,” August 2, 2017.

26.4.2 Positive Experiences

Multiple interviewees relayed less than positive initial experiences with Charismatic praxis. Mack described feeling uncomfortable while attending Charismatic conferences at other churches. The teaching was familiar and he had no qualms with the theological views expressed, but the prayer practices made him uneasy. The various ways conference attendees expressed their spirituality were foreign and frankly scary for Mack.

Yet, it was also while attending a Charismatic conference that Mack had what he described as “my first God experience”. He was in a conversation with a fellow attendee who challenged Mack about a way he described himself as “a slow learner”. The other attendee asked, “who told you that?” Mack never considered this before and when encouraged to see himself from “God’s perspective” Mack had a very vivid and transformative experience of God’s love. As he recounted, “I worked in a church for like seven to ten years and I pastored people but I didn’t know who Jesus really was. I almost feel like a child again, starting over, relearning the muscle memory.”⁵¹⁵

Similarly, Robbie noted the significance of a positive experience the first time he was around Charismatic spirituality, particularly prophetic prayer. Unlike Mack, it was in a familiar setting.

In the youth office we used to do something each week and we used to have two people prophesy and pray over someone. I was sceptical you could hear God for others in those kind of ways.⁵¹⁶

The “youth office” was the staff offices of the youth ministry of Central Presbyterian. He had worked in other Presbyterian churches, grown up in a Presbyterian church, but it was the first time in a church setting people spoke so openly about the Spirit. In his prior experience “it was always Father, Son and Holy Bible.” But, as Robbie

⁵¹⁵ Interview with “Mack,” August 2, 2017.

⁵¹⁶ Interview with “Robbie,” November 15, 2017.

described, when they prayed for him they had “prophetic words” about details in his life they could not have known otherwise. The “prophetic words” were always encouraging and for Robbie concrete evidence of God speaking.

26.4.3 Affirmation of Others

Like-minded Christians also proved helpful to interviewees. Multiple recounted how significant particular Reformed Charismatic associate pastors were. As Connie described, “I knew it was God, but no one else ever talked about God. [They] were the first ones that said this is really part of something. This is normal.”⁵¹⁷ She is referring here to having specific Reformed Charismatic pastors validate her spirituality.

For Lori, Tonya’s leadership in inner healing and anointing prayer had a major impact. Lori had been around a form of intercessory prayer at another Presbyterian church, but, as Lori recounted, “[I] didn’t grow a lot in that until [Tonya] invited me to be part of conferences she was going to.”⁵¹⁸ It was significant for Lori to learn with someone she trusted and they could experiment and grow together.

Similarly, Terence attributes his involvement in Charismatic prayer and particularly inner healing prayer teams to Tonya. He initially came to receive prayer himself and Tonya affirmed he had “gifts” in prayer. She invited him to be part of the team marking a turning point in his spiritual formation.

Mack recounted, as a member of the youth ministry staff, how helpful it was to have a place of shared experience with other staff members. He attended Central Presbyterian from childhood. Charismatic theology and praxis was never a part of his experience until the youth ministry became more like an independent Charismatic

⁵¹⁷ Interview with “Connie,” November 17, 2017.

⁵¹⁸ Interview with “Lori,” August 2, 2017.

church. He benefited from having “a place to practice, fail and learn in the youth staff”⁵¹⁹

With this, multiple Reformed Charismatics described the challenges of having specific Reformed Charismatic associate pastors leave the church. Erin, a former member of youth staff, described how “it is hard to not have a leader or teacher. It is easy to let someone else teach you then to be your own leader. It is also harder when you are not leading others.”⁵²⁰ For Erin and her husband it was a slow, gradual process of declining involvement at Central Presbyterian.

26.4.4 Seeing Positive Results with Charismatic Praxis

Luhrmann notes the significance of experiencing positive results from prayer:

I never heard anyone say that they realized that God had spoken to them for the first time in quiet time, probably because in the beginning the conversation seems too forced, too much like silly pretend. In practice, the prayers that really persuaded people that God was speaking to them in their minds were prayers for other people, in which the ordinary thoughts that floated into their mind during the prayer seemed uncannily appropriate for the person about whom they prayed. Then the thoughts could be identified as extraordinary. When that happened—when there was some apparent external confirmation that an inner thought came from an external source—people got visibly excited and happy as they recounted their discovery.⁵²¹

Alice had just such an experience. She had grown up in Presbyterian churches, raised by parents who were Reformed pastors and theologians. She heard about Charismatic spirituality, but never really been around it. A speaker at a conference she was attending encouraged people to prophesy for each other. She was nervous, confused and unimpressed with herself when praying for the woman next to her. All she “saw” in her imagination was a “yellow school bus”. She didn’t know what it meant or what to say about it. She shared the image with the woman, which stimulated further

⁵¹⁹ Interview with “Mack,” August 2, 2017.

⁵²⁰ Interview with “Erin,” October 27, 2017.

⁵²¹ Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*, 49.

thoughts in her mind she also shared impromptu, “you can’t choose who is sitting on the bus with you”⁵²². To Alice’s surprise, the woman was deeply impacted. The woman interpreted it as a direct message from God about a challenging situation she was facing at work. For Alice, it was an “external confirmation that an inner thought came from an external source”⁵²³.

26.4.5 Therapeutic Theology and Praxis

Interwoven in interviews with Reformed Charismatics is what Luhrmann observed as a therapeutic theology with notable similarities to psychotherapy. This is particularly apparent in the inner healing prayer ministry at Central Presbyterian. Practitioners will often use a “healing timeline” from the Life Span Integration Program,⁵²⁴ a specific psychotherapeutic method, introduced by a mental health counsellor at the church. Although there is some debate among practitioners the extent such therapeutic practices should be used and how much they compete with or replace dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Luhrmann notes most psychotherapy focuses on identifying and addressing “the cognitive appraisal that generates the bad feeling”⁵²⁵. Similarly, Lori, the director of the inner healing prayer teams, described:

What we are hoping for is God’s truth and God’s reality. We all have partial realities, and hopefully what happens is the perspective they get is more God’s-- the true reality.⁵²⁶

Lori offered a hypothetical example:

⁵²² Interview with “Alice,” October 15, 2017.

⁵²³ Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*, 49.

⁵²⁴ www.lifespanintegration.com

⁵²⁵ Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*, 110.

⁵²⁶ Interview with “Lori,” August 2, 2017.

Oftentimes what we find is that somehow someone has misinterpreted an event. They have understood an event differently than what really happened. A child thinks they were responsible for siblings because parents were neglecting them because of alcohol or drug abuse and they have misunderstood that they didn't need to rescue siblings. God can take them back to childhood and show them that they misinterpreted or not fully interpreted their situation and God will show them his perspective.⁵²⁷

Clients are led through a process of changing their perspectives on themselves, others, past situations to more align with what is viewed as God's perspective.

Luhrmann notes this is challenging to do at times as cognitive perspectives are difficult to consciously access and identify. So, "it becomes the therapist's job to make the client feel inherently lovable"⁵²⁸. Central in many Reformed Charismatic descriptions of interactions with God is feeling known, loved and accepted. This expectation is present in the majority culture theology of Central, but Reformed Charismatics recounted experiencing divine love more intensely and emotionally. They often spoke of intimate conversational interaction with God. The divine was characterised as a personal, present relational being, available and attentive and often patient, kind and gentle in demeanour. Reformed Charismatics relate to the deity as one would a caring friend, a wise and patient counsellor, a loving parent--loving even when issuing rebuke and discipline.

And last, Luhrmann notes "The common wisdom is that for the therapy to work [...] clients need to want to change; [...] to see themselves from a different perspective; and to practice new emotional habits."⁵²⁹ As mentioned above, this too is an emphasis in inner healing prayer. Clients are asked prior to a prayer session to: "give permission to God and really need to say that out loud and when people do that God shows up".⁵³⁰

⁵²⁷ Interview with "Lori," August 2, 2017.

⁵²⁸ Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back : Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*, 110.

⁵²⁹ Luhrmann, 110.

⁵³⁰ Interview with "Lori," August 2, 2017.

When “God shows up” it is expected prayer recipients will gain new cognitive beliefs and practical change will result.

26.4.6 Patterns and Clues

Reformed Charismatics never cited explicit discernment guidelines. Instead, they offered what is more like clues or positive signs of divine activity. For many it is a process of noticing patterns over time that are interpreted as evidence of the divine. It proved important to be able to confirm personally received revelatory insights with sacred texts, particularly the bible. Individual ability to discern is considered limited, so community accountability is encouraged. And aligned with the therapeutic principles outlined above, Reformed Charismatics expect God’s voice and activity to be loving. While open to God’s judgment and correction, those interviewed at Central Presbyterian associated condemning, negative, anxiety producing thoughts, images or experiences to sources other than God. In Rachel’s own words, “It always has to be for the person’s good”.⁵³¹

Interviewees cited multiple clues or patterns helpful in their discernment. As Luhrmann notes among Vineyard congregants, thoughts that are spontaneous or unexpected are more easily attributed to God.⁵³² Pearl describes how:

thoughts from God come out of nowhere. I pray in the morning, and I’m not totally clear until I have my coffee. Then I pray at breakfast. Shortly after that breakfast prayer I will get thoughts and solutions that are not me because I’m not thinking about it and concentrating on it. I’m doing other things and out of nowhere comes the answer to the thought, the nudge I should do something. I know it is God because it is out of nowhere. It is not me trying to solve the problem or get an answer.⁵³³

⁵³¹ Interview with “Rachel,” August 2, 2107.

⁵³² Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back : Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*, 64.

⁵³³ Interview with “Pearl,” November 17, 2017.

In addition to the spontaneity of the thoughts, Reformed Charismatics noted other accompanying sensations that bring assurance. For Pearl, “sometimes I feel the energy, a great big light bathing me and who I pray with”.⁵³⁴ However, she was clear that “sometimes I pray with people and don’t feel anything” and she does what God asks regardless. Darren described routines associated with a pattern of receiving messages from God in the middle of the night.

When I go to bed at night I put a pencil and paper next to the bed and I ask God to give me revelation. I wake up and write it down. I know it is God speaking. It is a voice inside my head and sometimes it is accompanied with a light, my eyes are closed, it is totally black but suddenly there will be light, a soft light, a light blue or light green, everything is illuminated.⁵³⁵

Others note a succinctness and clarity to the thoughts in addition to their spontaneity.

God’s thoughts are often short, simple, crystal clear, right, peaceful. My thoughts are not like this and when God speaks he clears it up. My thoughts are more like chaos and my emotions and human sinfulness mixed up in here. Emotions that aren’t pure. I can’t necessarily detect God’s perspective right away I have to struggle and wrestle and pray and get that clarity, but sometimes it is easy and comes right away.⁵³⁶

As Luhmann notes one of the tests of navigating mystery is attention to one’s emotions, particularly the feeling of peace. According to Connie, “When hearing the voice of the Lord it will issue in peace. If not peace I am missing something and haven’t hit on it yet.”⁵³⁷ The “fruit of the Spirit” listed in Galatians 5:22-23 as “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control”⁵³⁸ are also referenced as indicators God is speaking:

The fruit of spirit, those are the compass points of the Holy Spirit and those are the things I can use in my soul to determine what God is doing in this situation. And being wholly submitted to that even if I don’t want to.⁵³⁹

⁵³⁴ Interview with “Pearl,” November 17, 2017.

⁵³⁵ Interview with “Darren,” August 4, 2017.

⁵³⁶ Interview with “Connie,” November 17, 2017.

⁵³⁷ Interview with “Connie,” November 17, 2017.

⁵³⁸ Galatians 5:22, Holy Bible, New International Version.

⁵³⁹ Interview with “Connie,” November 17, 2017.

In addition to the tone, emotional content, ‘crisp’-ness and surrounding phenomena, some Reformed Charismatics learn to recognize divine messages by how they physiologically register. Luhrmann notes this as well. “If a thought felt stronger or different from other thoughts, it was more likely to be identified as God’s”⁵⁴⁰ These are thoughts like one’s own thoughts, but of a different quality, texture and sense of source or location. The thought seems to come from outside of oneself rather than originating in one’s mind. Or the thought moved differently through one’s mind, often in ways described as quicker.

26.4.7 Confirmation by Community or Circumstances

Another significant test, also noted by Luhrmann, is confirmation either by circumstances or by other people.⁵⁴¹ Nan often waits for prayer insights to be confirmed over time. She keeps notes to aid in the process of checking if what she heard came to be. Nan recounted a specific example of being on a nominating committee for a new youth pastor. The committee had settled on a final candidate, but Nan had a strong sense against the majority of the committee. She couldn’t clearly identify what it was, but shared her concerns and swayed the committee to offer the position to someone else. Within a few years she received news that this man, hired by a different church, had been caught in sexually inappropriate interactions with youth. This was confirmation for Nan her sense had been a warning from God.⁵⁴² Similarly, Pearl shared a painful example of the first time she clearly heard God’s voice while in her twenties. She and her husband were commercial fishermen and one morning while

⁵⁴⁰ Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back : Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*, 67.

⁵⁴¹ Luhrmann, 65.

⁵⁴² Interview with “Nan,” April 20, 2017.

her husband prepared to go out on the boat she clearly heard “don’t be in a hurry this is the last time you will see him”⁵⁴³. He died at sea that day.

Assurance and confirmation can also come from other trustworthy people hearing and seeing the same thing. This is illustrated in the discernment process Steve used related to the earthquake decision at Central Presbyterian. Multiple other people confirmed they had heard something similar in prayer as Judy. Discernment in this case was also aided by confirmation from scientific evidence.

26.4.8 Style

It is also worth noting the preferred style of prayer among Reformed Charismatics at Central Presbyterian. Most prefer contemplative prayer. Public expressions of spirituality tend to be more reserved than the emotional and physically demonstrative forms associated with Pentecostal-Charismatic congregations. When Reformed Charismatics displayed more expressive spirituality, they tended to disguise it in public and reserve it for more private settings. Jay described praying in tongues at home rather than church gatherings. This is in part because of his perceptions of social disapproval, but also because he himself was sceptical of Charismatic praxis thinking it was just “people wanting to put on a show,” and socially manipulate others.⁵⁴⁴

When acting on prayers in ways that involve praying for others or sharing words and images, Reformed Charismatics at Central often take a low-key approach. As Rachel described “at [Central] it is under the radar...don’t ask don’t tell”. As discussed above, she likens inner healing prayer to special operation military units: “no

⁵⁴³ Interview with “Pearl,” November 17, 2017.

⁵⁴⁴ Interview with “Jay,” October 15, 2017.

publicity, no accolades or applause. We get in and we get out. All of us love that.”⁵⁴⁵

Rachel loves it because it resonates with her understanding of divine will and ways:

Mine comes from Sermon the Mount where you give in secret and you pray in secret and a third thing I can't remember. I connect with that. It is just between me and God and if he wants other people to know he will tell them.⁵⁴⁶

It also feels more socially appropriate and sensitive to Rachel.

I have been physically healed, but I don't talk about it because I have had so many people in my life that haven't been healed. I don't want to talk about a silly little healing [of a concussion] he did with me.⁵⁴⁷

Again, this is a dramatically different understanding of testimony than in Pentecostal-Charismatic congregations, where it is encouraged to share stories in the hope others will experience them personally or at least be encouraged by them.

For certain Reformed Charismatics, as mentioned above, this more contemplative, private, reserved style is a challenge. They want to be more vocal, more expressive in their spirituality and find themselves constrained and judged. As Kate described,

One of the reasons I didn't stay in the job is that they were afraid of me. I would push the envelope in meetings: Why aren't we praying more or allowing the Spirit to work more, instead of having everything decent and in order?⁵⁴⁸

When confronting colleagues with her different style preferences, she was told “that is not how we do things here and [its] not Presbyterian”. She thinks they were scared of her approach. “I would believe in faith for things and people would think it would not happen and it would happen. [...] I felt like I had to downplay. I felt smothered. I felt suppressed.”⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁵ Interview with “Rachel,” August 2, 2017.

⁵⁴⁶ Interview with “Rachel,” August 2, 2017.

⁵⁴⁷ Interview with “Rachel,” August 2, 2017.

⁵⁴⁸ Interview with “Kate,” August 2, 2017.

⁵⁴⁹ Interview with “Kate,” August 2, 2017.

26.5 Communal Influence

These style preferences are in many ways a response to communal norms and makes Reformed Charismatics particularly unique from the Vineyard congregants Luhrmann observed. At the Vineyard, Charismatic theology and praxis is the norm, affirmed by leaders, encouraged by other congregants. To quote Luhrmann:

It is a profoundly social process. [...] It is no easy matter to become confident that the God you imagine in the privacy of your mind exists externally in the world, talking back. In the struggle to give the invisible being its external presence, the congregation surrounds the individual and helps to hold the being apart from the self, separate and external. It is the church that confirms that the invisible being is really present and it is that church that reminds people week after week that the external invisible being loves them, despite all the evidence of the dreary human world. And slowly, the church begins to shape the most private reaches of the way congregants feel and know.⁵⁵⁰

Central Presbyterian does not do this for Reformed Charismatics. It is a much more nuanced, complex dynamic of measured and occasional encouragement and significant discouragement. The “external invisible being” loves you, that Central Presbyterian strives to affirm, but not in ways a Reformed Charismatic may believe or hope to experience. “The evidence of the dreary human world” is fairly compelling at Central and claims of experience of divine presence and power can be seen as fantasy, an over-realized eschatology.

If communal support is so crucial, how are Reformed Charismatics able to affirm and sustain their praxis? It becomes a juggling act of sustaining belief without community, despite community and through community in specific forms. This juggling act may cause fatigue and stifle spiritual experience. However, in some cases it can empower it. The fatigue is often described as the kind ex-pats experience living abroad. Consistent cross-cultural communication, overcoming barriers of shared norms, language and understanding, and needing to do the bulk of adapting to the

⁵⁵⁰ Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back : Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*, 131.

majority leads to a particular form of dislocation and stress. The stifling is described in any number of ways and is simply the opposite of the encouragement and resulting transformation Charismatics experience in a congregation like a Vineyard church. That said, being forced to forge one's own path, challenged to understand and affirm what one actually believes and to sacrifice for one's values can be a significant learning process in and of itself. Those Reformed Charismatics who have experienced the rigors of praxis as a minority have the opportunity to cultivate perseverance, tenacity and assurance that can prove vital in the face of the overwhelming doubt Luhrmann notes. Ironically, rather than having a majority community aiding in sustaining belief through doubt, it is majority norms which forces the Reformed Charismatic to cultivate conviction, if they choose to continue to embrace their Charismatic belief and praxis.

26.5.1 Without Community

Several interviewees shared stories of transformative moments apart from community. Darren believes God has spoken to him throughout his life, but he was unsure exactly who this divine being was.

He has been talking to me my whole life. My mother and grandmother raised me because my parents divorced. My grandmother was a Christian scientists and I was very confused. Until I was 50 I searched. I knew God existed I just didn't know the path. I was going through a hard time at 52. My wife of 24 years became unfaithful. We divorced. I lay there one night and I took out a gun and I was ready to blow my head off. A physical angel came that was nine feet tall picked me up and held me and said 'God loves you and I'm here to tell you that'. 'Don't do that.' 'Don't take your life.' The rest is history.⁵⁵¹

While considering himself a Christian, Darren had no church community. It was in his late fifties that Darren started attending churches for the first time.

I was hearing God before then but I didn't realize who it was. I worked through college and after college in a research department doing very advanced research and I would be diligently working in the lab and plodding along this way and trying to find an answer to a problem; I would go home fall asleep and wake up

⁵⁵¹ Interview with "Darren," August 4, 2017.

at 2am and boom, the answer is over there, not over here. And as a result of that I have multiple patents. I knew it was God, but I didn't know him like I do now.⁵⁵²

Church community became an important part of his faith formation at a different point in his life. It also proved to be a major source of confusion and pain.

For Pearl, the role of church community is essentially reversed in terms of seasons of life. She was raised in a Pentecostal church and in a family that affirmed Charismatic spirituality. She currently attends Central Presbyterian and doesn't find her spirituality necessarily affirmed nor understood. But, from her perspective, it doesn't make any difference that she doesn't have a supportive community.

I feel God's presence during the services, I'm open to the Lord. I know what is the voice of God and what is not. If others aren't experiencing that it doesn't matter. I have a job there [at Central Presbyterian] and that is where I'm supposed to be.⁵⁵³

Pearl speculated her lack of dependence on communal support may be "because I was in Assembly of God. It may have grounded my experience and later I didn't need that". So, "I don't need community to sustain my faith." And "I don't have to have community to experience it [Charismatic spirituality]. My faith is what gives me the confidence."⁵⁵⁴ Pearl particularly stood out among interviewees for her confidence in her ability to hear God. She expressed significantly less ambiguity in what she was experiencing and less difficulty discerning the difference between her thoughts and God's messages. At a point in the interview I had to clarify whether she was actually hearing God's voice audibly because her language was so straightforward about knowing exactly what God was saying. Like others interviewed, it was never audible, but like a thought. "I never doubt. I've had so many experiences." If anything, Pearl's spiritual experiences, and confidence in them, have only increased over time.

⁵⁵² Interview with "Darren," August 4, 2017.

⁵⁵³ Interview with "Pearl," November 17, 2017.

⁵⁵⁴ Interview with "Pearl," November 17, 2017.

26.5.2 Despite Community

Most Reformed Charismatics described challenges in navigating communal norms at Central Presbyterian. Mention has already been made of Sharon's experience attempting to start a deliverance ministry. A key part of her journey is the substantial support she has received from Pastor Bob and his independent itinerant ministry. This specialized support offsets the resistance she experiences at Central. After so much rejection it is notable Sharon is still part of the congregation. Her resources for deliverance ministry are all outside of the church, her husband has actually started attending another church in the city, but for Sharon there is still a significant point of connection with the inner healing prayer ministry and through the myriad of other relationships she has in the congregation. Others tell a different story. It is usually a gradual process of disappoint, clashes over praxis and resulting fatigue.

Consistently, what keeps Reformed Charismatics engaged so long at Central Presbyterian is the extent Charismatic spirituality is affirmed and present at the church. As Eric describes "You have to do it a little undercover, maybe use different terms, but people are really open to it."⁵⁵⁵ So long as he could speak the shared language fluently, and sensitively navigate rules and norms, Eric found people fairly accepting of his Charismatic spirituality. But, the work of translation caused fatigue. He attempted to find resources internally at Central Presbyterian to sustain and support his spirituality, but it "wasn't enough". He listened to podcasts, read books, took online courses and occasionally attended conferences at Charismatic churches. However, he like, Ken and Erin, Kate and Mack and others described above, after years at Central, eventually left for more Charismatic communities. Again, it is important to note it was never solely because of a lack of a majority Charismatic theological and praxis at Central. There

⁵⁵⁵ Interview with "Eric," August 3, 2017.

were always other factors influencing decisions to leave the church, from relational conflicts to life transitions, but tension over norms was always a factor.

26.5.3 Particular, Unique Community

With few exceptions, those Reformed Charismatics who have stayed at Central, particularly over decades of theological shifts and staff changes, found a small Reformed Charismatic community within the church. Mention has been made of those who found each other in the inner healing prayer ministry. This dynamic was also present in the youth ministry for the season it functioned much like an independent Charismatic church. It became a refuge of sorts for those experiencing disconnect with the majority of the congregation. As Eric recounts, “I can get what I need with youth staff. I can go through the cross-cultural in other settings.”⁵⁵⁶

For some the youth ministry became their only congregational community. Erin recalls adult volunteers who participated not because of a sense of call to work with youth as much as a place to experience Charismatic spirituality. The youth ministry element for some enhanced the experience.

I liked doing it in youth group with teens because we could try stuff with them and it wasn't a big deal, didn't have to worry about politics and people's history, it was ideal for me to go through it in that context.⁵⁵⁷

The youth group in many ways reflected the developmental stage associated with adolescents, marked by individuation, testing boundaries and experimentation.

Megan took a slightly different approach than the isolation of the youth ministry. She has been part of Central Presbyterian from its founding days, but she “didn't learn to hear God from church”⁵⁵⁸. Her introduction to Charismatic spirituality was through involvement in Community Bible Study, an independent para-church

⁵⁵⁶ Interview with “Eric,” August 3, 2017.

⁵⁵⁷ Interview with “Ken,” October 27, 2017.

⁵⁵⁸ Interview with “Meg,” August 4, 2017.

organization. Over time she formed connections with other Reformed Charismatics at Central. She was asked by Tonya to take over leading the anointing prayer ministry. This spurred her to explore further opportunities to connect Reformed Charismatics. For Meg, however, it was crucial to maintain good communication and rapport with church staff. She never does any events without approval. Now Immerse prayer gatherings have become a regular monthly event. For Meg,

A lot of people are at church for a lesson on Sundays. I'm in a group that is more intense. We found each other. I'm in a group of people that live their Christian faith everyday of the week.⁵⁵⁹

Immerse is promoted as a “contemplation and prayer experience,” attendees are invited to “listen for God’s message for you using a combination of *lectio divina* (divine reading) and *visio divina* [...] and a time of Extraordinary Prayer”.⁵⁶⁰ Around fifteen to twenty people usually attend these gatherings.

Whether outside of community, despite community or finding unique internal and external forms of community, social formation is a factor. It is not as straightforward as in a congregation like Vineyard, at least in the ways Luhrmann frames it. The sheer size of Central Presbyterian is undoubtedly a factor. Everyone to some degree or another must find a smaller church community within the large church. Yet, the particular ways Reformed Charismatics experience community and social formation is primarily due to the clash over Charismatic spirituality. As noted earlier, those Reformed Charismatics who find a subgroup within Central and particularly those who don’t feel the need to change majority norms are consistently able to maintain sustained, positive involvement in the church. Those who can’t find a subgroup or are disillusioned by a lack of change often leave the congregation.

⁵⁵⁹ Interview with “Meg,” August 4, 2017.

⁵⁶⁰ Citations take from Immerse promotional material on Central Presbyterian’s website.

All said, community matters for Reformed Charismatics. Per Luhrmann, community influences training, interpretation and sustaining belief in the face of evidence of doubt. However, contra Luhrmann, it is in surprising ways as belief in an invisible external being is sustained through, but also despite and at times apart from communal, social influences.

27 CONCLUSION

Reformed Charismatics present a unique case of ecumenism. They are distinct from classical Pentecostals or the independent Charismatic congregants at the Vineyard churches Luhrmann studied; yet in many ways similar. They are aligned with Reformed theology and praxis to varying degrees; however, also a nascent group, albeit internally diverse and loosely connected, that stands apart from the institutional majority of their congregation in fundamental ways. They also are Reformed Charismatics in a different historical moment than those of the Charismatic Renewal of the 1960s and 1970s. For example, none of those interviewed seemed to suggest they are part of a larger epochal moment in church history or for that matter in the history of Central Presbyterian. They are simply working out their spirituality in the context of a community where it is not embraced as the norm. The result is a unique example of Pentecostal influence and a particular example of integration of often opposing faith traditions.

Conclusion

Four concluding observations are highlighted below. Each is explored and argued more thoroughly in the body of the text, so only succinctly restated here. First, there is a form of Pentecostalism overlooked in current scholarship, often hidden in mainline denominations. Second, the unique particularity of Reformed Charismatics makes it difficult to establish general theoretical claims or conduct normative, prescriptive analysis. Third, theological reflection can only go so far without dialogue with ordinary, lived theology and can benefit from interaction with social scientific research. Fourth, Reformed Charismatics are a unique form of ecumenism offering valuable insights into Pentecostal influence and ‘ordinary’ ecumenical efforts at a congregational level.

Historical reconstructions of Pentecostalism and Pentecostal influence in the United States are usually framed around three epochal shifts: fifty years of classical Pentecostalism in the first half of the twentieth century morphed during the Charismatic Renewal of the 1960s-1970s then splintered into various independent Charismatic churches and networks from the 1980s to the present. There are debated versions of this framework and nuanced additions related to global influence and expansion. This study suggests an amendment to the overall framework. Post-Charismatic renewal, rather than a movement in decline and splintering into independent churches, Pentecostalism also went underground in the form of minority subgroups marked by a hybrid theology and praxis. Reformed Charismatics demonstrate a particular version of Charismatic theology and praxis comprised of those who have stayed in their historic churches, yet stand markedly in contrast to their majority congregational norms. Surely there are similar Charismatic subgroups in other mainline denominations even in independent, but non-Charismatic churches.

Although difficult to detect and access, it may be interesting to explore such minority groups further.

Reformed Charismatics, then, become another version of what scholars have observed about the adaptability of Pentecostalism globally. As such, attention to particularity and diversity is key in studying them. Even within the relatively small group of Reformed Charismatics at Central Presbyterian there is significant internal diversity, distinct preferences around praxis and differing experiences of being part of the wider church community. And, this is just one small subgroup in one particular church of one denomination in a particular region of the world. Thus, their spirituality and experience is highly contextual. Efforts to make general claims about similar groups must be done with caution. Researcher reflexivity, descriptive rather than perspective analysis and humility in the face of at times overwhelming diversity and epistemological limitations are essential in this form of theological reflection.

Because theological reflection and biblical interpretation is contextual and culturally conditioned, debates over doctrine and hermeneutics can only go so far in addressing diverse perspectives. Academic theology, albeit valuable, is distinct and in various ways disconnected from everyday, ordinary theology. Ethnography and cultural analysis, while limited, serve as another conversation partner in theological reflection. The use of ethnography in practical theology provides insights into details of everyday experience and belief, adding nuance to distinctions between operative and espoused theology, for example, or the ad hoc adaptive nature of ordinary theology. It also proves a helpful tool in accessing minority views, conflicting accounts or voices often hidden or overlooked.

Reformed Charismatics are such a hidden minority voice, providing insights about Pentecostal influence and particularly how Reformed and Pentecostal theology

and praxis both clash and compliment each other. Navigating differences is less a process of resolving theological debates and more a process of sharing power, embracing different perspectives and prioritizing the most crucial shared values, beliefs and communal boundary markers over individual or subgroup preferences. How welcome or much space there is given within the corporate norms for difference in interpretation of common events, different styles of prayer and worship, different verbal and body language has a dramatic impact on Reformed Charismatic experience. They perceive their 'ways' as abnormal and potentially divisive. Yet they don't always demand others to change, don't always think their interpretation is normative. A congregation that can welcome them enough to give them a 'room', a space within the resources and relationships of the church to cultivate and express their spirituality, will also benefit from what their perspective brings to the wider congregation in the form of inspiring praxis, alternative prayer practices, aid in decision making and an internal resource for those exploring Pentecostal spirituality.

However, creating room for Reformed Charismatic spirituality also promises to bring challenges, conflict and constant debate about the extent wider congregational norms need to shift. Do the checks and balances of democratized, shared power within Presbyterian polity provide the banks needed to guide the 'river' of Pentecostal spirituality or prove to be a dam stopping the positive 'renewing' of this more experiential interaction with an immanent deity? Can the distortions and abuses of power some warn so strongly against in Pentecostalism be minimized by Reformed doctrines that anticipate human depravity, are suspicious of human potential and limit each individual or subgroup's ability to have disproportionate influence on the majority? While attempting to maintain cohesion and unity in diversity may frustrate and stifle it may also prevent harmful excesses or abuse. Yet, as demonstrated by the

accounts of the Reformed Charismatics in this study and the wider congregation at Central Presbyterian, these are ideals that are much more nuanced and complex in the messiness of the real relationships and power struggles of a congregation. Tension and unresolved conflict are ever present. Manipulating the system to navigate ‘church politics’ is as common, and diverse in the form it takes, as adjusting one’s own individual or subgroup’s ways for the sake of the whole. Attempting to pastor a congregation through their differences can be a minefield of managing competing demands and constant disappointment and disapproval. Some will stay, having their preferences satisfied. Other may stay but remain unsatisfied and agitating for change. Others will opt to leave for a different congregation, or none at all, that better aligns with their perspectives and satisfies their needs.

However, multiple of the Reformed Charismatics at Central demonstrate that it is possible for Presbyterian congregations to make room for Pentecostal spirituality without having to make wholesale changes to congregational norms. The Reformed Charismatic minority in many ways affirms Reformed theology, polity and praxis and are primarily seeking to add elements of Pentecostal spirituality while not completely replacing or radically altering communal norms. In this process of changing ‘the way we do things’ it may benefit both Reformed Charismatics and the wider congregation for there to be more overt discussion about Charismatic theology and praxis and intentional clarification of what praxis is sanctioned. As it is now, Reformed Charismatics are often feeling out each setting to adapt to leadership in the room, shifting norms dependent on those gathered and the ever-present possibility of rejection or even unexpected acceptance. Charismatic theology and praxis is often addressed indirectly, in ad hoc ways. Central Presbyterian does not have any official written statement offering doctrinal positions or guidance about religious experience. There is

more a subtle, relational, unstated understanding about rules. There are certain times and places for certain types of religious experience. Many of these norms are shaped through perspectives storied and behaviour modelled publicly. Thus, overtly and directly addressing debates over Pentecostal theology and praxis needs to go beyond committee meetings, theological discussions and doctrinal statements to interact with the ordinary, lived theology of the congregation. Attention needs to be given to what stories are told from the pulpit, what rituals are normalized and what forms of prayer are routinized. Particular attention needs to be given to cultivating shared interpretations of different types of praxis, particularly as new forms of spiritual expression are integrated into the wider congregation. If space is made for prayers focused on physical and emotional healing, time needs to be spent as a community teaching and talking about expectations for what healing looks like, ways to pray and how to interpret divine activity or the absence thereof. If room is made for other forms of discernment in decision making it will be important to take the time to actively engage with the abuse and limitations of the prophetic as well as the positives and potential it has for personal and corporate discernment in ways that aren't reactive, but woven into the normal teaching and liturgy of the congregation. Many examples can be given, but the key is determining what is allowed, then normalizing it through praxis and intentionally cultivating a shared theology that can facilitate a common language and interpretations.

Reformed Charismatics are in many ways a demonstration of everyday ecumenism, as each individual practically works out integrating two distinct faith traditions into a personal, workable spirituality. Through their own "glocalization" process, they form a "spiritual bricolage" constructed from resources available to them in the congregation(s) they are immersed. Along the way they cultivate a hybrid

theology and praxis soliciting diverse reactions from their wider social group and experiencing diverse forms of adaptation and fatigue. In various ways, often dependent on the circumstances and setting, they are looked to as valuable specialists. At other times, depending again on the context and characters involved, they are viewed with scepticism and marginalized. In all, as research subjects, they offer a very ordinary and fascinating example of Pentecostalism and Pentecostal influence for those willing to take a closer look at these pragmatic ecumenists and others like them.

Appendix

Interview Information Sheet

Introduction: My name is Greg Millikan, and I am a student at Durham University conducting an ethnographic study for a doctoral dissertation in practical theology. My telephone number is _____ and e-mail is _____. My research supervisor is Dr. Marcus Pound and his e-mail is _____. You may contact either of us at any time if you have questions about this study.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to study the experiences and perspectives of those in a Reformed (Presbyterian) Church with Charismatic beliefs and practices. I am trying to learn more about what it is like for someone who is both open to Pentecostal and Charismatic beliefs and part of a Reformed (Presbyterian) faith community. My aim is to better understand the influence of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements on churches like yours and about what your experience has been of embracing two faith traditions that are in many ways distinct and at times divided.

Procedure: If you consent, you will be asked several questions in an oral interview that will take place at a location we agree on. I will take written notes and an audio recording of the interview.

Time required: The interview will take approximately one hour.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may still refuse to answer any question that you do not wish to answer. You may also withdraw from the study at any time. Following the interview I will provide a written draft of how your interview is used in my dissertation and you will have an opportunity to provide feedback if you wish.

Risks: There are no known risks associated with this interview. However, if at any point you feel uncomfortable please inform me.

Benefits: While there is no guaranteed benefit, it is possible that you will enjoy sharing your answers to these questions or that you will find the conversation meaningful. This study is intended to benefit your congregation and others by providing deeper understanding of the theology and practice of ‘Reformed Charismatics’.

Confidentiality/Anonymity: Your name will be kept confidential in all of the reporting and/or writing related to this study. I will be the only person present for the interview and the only person who listens to the audio recording. My supervisor will have access to your interview as needed. When I write the ethnography, I will use pseudonyms—made up names—for all participants, unless you specify in writing that you wish to be identified by name.

If you wish to choose your own pseudonym for the study, please indicate the first name you would like me to use for you here:

_____.

Sharing results: I plan to construct an ethnography—a written account of what I learn—based on these interviews together with observations of the church and my reading. This ethnography will be submitted to my research supervisor as part of my dissertation. The audio recording and notes from your interview will be stored electronically on an encrypted file on a password protected hard drive. At the completion of my dissertation I will destroy all files and recordings.

Publication: There is the possibility that I will publish this study or refer to it in published writing in the future. In this event, I will continue to use pseudonyms (as

described above) and I may alter some identifying details in order to further protect your anonymity.

Before you sign: By signing below, you are agreeing to a recorded interview for this research study. Be sure that any questions you may have are answered to your satisfaction. If you agree to participate in this study, a copy of this document will be given to you. ⁵⁶¹

⁵⁶¹ Information Form adapted from Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice : An Introduction* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2008).



CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Reformed Charismatic Culture: beliefs and praxis

Name of Researcher: Greg Millikan

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above project	
2. I have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask any questions	
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason	
4. I have been informed about how the data will be used and stored	
5. I agree to take part in the above project	

Participant

Name

Signature

Date

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.....

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Researcher

Name

Signature

Date

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